

BUNDELKHAND IN 1857
A STUDY IN THE POLITICS OF A POPULAR UPRISING

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By
TAPTI RAY

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(TAPTI ROY)

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Abbreviations.

Actg.	Acting.
Bd.	Board.
C.O.A.	Commissioner's Office Allahabad Records.
C.O.J.	Commissioner's Office Jhansi Records.
Coll.	Collector.
Comm.	Commercial.
Commng.	Commanding.
Commr.	Commissioner.
Cons.	Consultations.
D.G.	<u>District Gazetteer.</u>
Dept.	Department.
Dy.	Deputy.
F.S.U.P.	S.A.A.Rizvi & M.L.Bhargava (ed), <u>Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh,</u> Vol.III.
For.Pol.	Foreign Political.
For. Sec.	Foreign Secret.
G.G./Gov.Gen.	Governor General.
Judl.	Judicial.
m.m.	Microfilm.
Magt.	Magistrate.
Mil.	Military.
Misc.	Miscellaneous.
N.A.I.	National Archives of India, New Delhi.
N.E.	<u>Narrative of Events attending the</u> <u>outbreak of Disturbances and Restora-</u> <u>tion of Authority, 1857-58.</u>

N.W.P.	North-Western Provinces.
Progs.	Proceedings.
Rev.	Revenue.
S.B.R.	Sadar Board of Revenue.
S.N.Terrrs.	Sagar and Narmada Territories.
S.R.	<u>Settlement Report.</u>
Secy.	Secretary.
Settl.	Settlement.
Suptd.	Superintendent.
U.P.R.A.A.	Uttar Pradesh Regional Archives, Allahabad.
U.P.S.A.L.	Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow.
W.B.S.A.	West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to review the character of the revolt that broke out and spread over large parts of Northern and Central India in 1857, in the context of a limited geographical confine, the division of Bundelkhand in present Uttar Pradesh. This insurrection was the first major and widespread protest of the Indians against their British rulers; the challenge that one mustered and the other faced, left a lingering memory which both cherished for their own reasons. The rule of a chartered commercial company gave way to direct governance of India by the British Crown in 1858. This change called for by the rebellion crucially altered the nature of British rule in India and concomitantly the experiences of the Indians under it. The rebellion was therefore, an event that both the ruler and the ruled looked upon as being decisive and the importance they assigned to it was exemplified by the amount that was written on it. Ranging from contemporary accounts, reminiscences, diaries to later-written books, pamphlets, articles, 1857 can lay claims to the largest bulk of writings put down in print on any single event in Indian history. It has been a recurrent theme in the Indian historiographical tradition, repeatedly invoked by the British to restate the strength of their rule and by the Indians to revive the scotched spirit of resistance. Such predisposition lent itself to modulate the tenor of the story that was told. Historical review of 1857 based on proper study took time to take shape and even when it did, one could detect the faded shadows of certain preconceived bias being braided with newly construed hypothesis.

This thesis does not wish to establish its rationale on the indictment of the existing historiography nor does it wish to debunk any of the opinions and arguments on the nature of rebellion. It acknowledges the seminal contributions of writers and historians towards re-creating the background and rearranging the series of happenings in the year 1857-58. If this work purports to break fresh grounds in terms of information or in seeking answers to new questions, it is only able to do so because the spade-work has been already done by so many others preceding it. The fundamental hypothesis with which the present exercise justifies a restatement of the oft-repeated story, stems from a certain degree of dissatisfaction with the way it has been told. The formation of its underlying argument can only be traced by way of a critical appraisal of the existing historiography.

The entire gamut of writings has been very broadly categorised under four heads - contemporary reminiscences published immediately after or sometime later, English attempts at historical representation of 1857 made in the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Indian writings of the same period and finally present day accounts claiming to use modern methods of dissection and analysis. None of the four categories, however, can be segregated into strict watertight compartments in terms of the ideas and arguments that each threw up. Every segment betrayed the influence of the tradition that preceded it and even while trying to undo the mental cramp that it diagnosed in that tradition, it often retained residues of it.

The earliest writers of the revolt were the contemporary English witnesses to the conflagration. Civil and military officials and non-official residents, both men and women who were present in the different stations at the moment of the outbreak put down their experiences in print for posterity to preserve. The fear, the stress and in no small measure the humiliation that they, the rulers and custodians of order, had to withstand forms as much a part of history as the upsurge that caused them. Filtered through the bitterness that these contemporary accounts disclosed towards rebellion, emerge a unique reproduction of its outbreak leading to the breakdown of authority, those crucial moments in history. No archive can supplant the information that these men and women furnished in their writings and no history can be written of 1857 ignoring the valuable information provided by them. It is true that most of these memoirs relate incidents primarily concerning the place where their authors had been present and the latter's saga in the course of the insurgency. A more thorough narrator would perhaps incorporate news and rumours about other places that had come wafting into his or her own. The indispensability of these narratives, however, lies in the detailed account of the outbreak, the situation immediately preceding it and an hourly description of all that the authors went through after it. In almost every station where the rebellion broke out, the English had to evacuate it and flee to safer resorts. Their journeys took them through villages, different towns and districts, the reaction of the people and the state of country in these myriad places come through vividly in their reminiscences admittedly captured through the coloured prism of their perspective. Of these contemporary writings once again, those

left behind by the district magistrates often written some years later were more substantial. The purpose of their narratives was not only to record the details of the uprising but also to diagnose the symptoms of disaffection whose outbreak took them so much by surprise. The writings of these district officials therefore often betray their sense of loss at the situation baffling and overwhelming them. If only to provide against the contingency of another such conflagration, the present one had to be comprehended and more important, its causes ascertained. Their accounts therefore grope through incidents, string together episodes preceding the rebellion and during it thereby providing themselves with contents much more than individual sagas of each author. Much of their perceptions and observations were embodied in the official narratives that all surviving districts officials had to compile on the outbreak of rebellion and the restoration of British authority. But, of course, in unofficial publications, the officers had more room for speculations.

The most striking feature of most of these contemporary reminiscences of officials and non-officials was that their authors had been able to gauge just how deep and widespread the disaffection, the antipathy, towards the British men went. They had no illusions about this conflagration being confined only to the mutiny of the sepøys or having been caused by it alone. The single statement made by the Magistrate and Collector of Banda, F.O. Mayne in his official narrative that "Never was revolution more rapid - never more complete" summarises the nature of the outbreak, which

present day historians have taken pages to prove.¹ Mrs. R.M. Coopland, the wife of an English officer who underwent a harrowing escape from Gwalior to Agra with others of the station made a similar observation. "It will be evident to all, from the behaviour of the villagers to us", she wrote, "that the disaffection was not confined to sepoys, as is sometimes asserted: indeed, the villagers always flocked into the station after the mutinies to murder and loot".² A deep insight enabled Mark Thornhill, the Magistrate of Mathura to perceive that "No one regretted the loss of our (British) rule; and with the exception of the Bunniahs, who suffered by it, all classes enjoyed the confusion".³ Such reflections on the nature of the rebellion can be collated from several other contemporary accounts.

Some of the other writers, however, stretched their analysis even further. Anticipating the conclusions reached by historians a century later, they diagnosed the cause of widespread recusancy against authority to the disruption in society and economy caused by the latter. To quote Thornhill, "The patriarchal authority of the Zamindars had been often cruelly abused - nevertheless its abolition was not an unmixed good; ... Till the breaking out of the mutiny this result had

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1. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the District of Banda, 1857-58. Part II by F.O. Mayne, Magistrate and Collector of Banda, 11th Sept. 1857.
 2. R.M. Coopland A Lady's Escape from Gwalior and Life in the Fort of Agra during the Mutinies of 1857 (London 1859), p. 139.
 3. Mark Thornhill; The Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during The rise, Progress and Suppression of the Indian Mutiny (London 1884), p. 114.

not been perceived, or if perceived, had been disregarded for the collapse of our rule was an event not anticipated; it now displayed itself". Observing how the people were going back to those customs that the British had forcibly prohibited after long deliberation, the magistrate wrote, "It was evident that in its most humane and philanthropic efforts our Government had not been in harmony with the sentiments of the country".⁴ W. Edwards, the Collector and Magistrate of Budaon in Rohilkhand in a later writing⁵ delved at some length to unravel the causes of tension both among the soldiers and the civilians. He found most of them in the mistakenly conceived British measures in the working of the army the revenue, judicial and police systems. The bitter antipathy to the British policies was best manifested by the systematic destruction of all Government revenue and other records in the sadar and subordinate offices in every district. Edwards saw definite beginnings and growth of a nationalist sentiment centred on the Mughal Emperor that ironed out the distrust between the Hindus and the Muslims.⁶ G. Hutchinson's narrative on the revolt in Awadh, P.G.Scot's account of his escape from Nowgong to Banda and Nagode and the accompanying adventure, among others, add to the fairly long list of such recollections.⁷

Important for their own worth, though not as well written as the former, were the military accounts of the

4. Ibid, pp. 35, 114.

5. W. Edwards, Facts and Reflection connected with Rebellion (Liverpool, 1859)

6. Ibid, p. 5.

7. Capt. G. Hutchinson, Narrative of the Mutinies in Oude. (London, n.d.); Capt. P.G.Scot; Personal Narrative of the Escape from Nowgong to Banda and Nagode (n.d.).

suppression of the rebellion and the restoration of British authority. Every military expedition had their official and non-official narrators and every successful General, their admiring biographers.⁸ These writings were biased without any pretensions to neutrality, the ultimate purpose of their authors being to recount the tale of counter-insurgency and recite the achievement and glory of the imperial army. The rebellion was lost in the saga of English military marches and battles. Yet they are useful to future historians for the story they tell and more important for being reflections of the minds of the English staging a come-back with vengeance and in furious retaliation. Infact, the amount that was written on the military exploits far outbid what was retold of the other aspects of the episode. They were meant to assert and establish the latent strength of British authority, momentarily dis-stabilised, but not permanently affected.

None of the writings discussed so far can pass off as being a history of the revolt of 1857; nor did the authors claim to be writing one. They called their accounts 'Reminiscences', 'Recollections', 'Reflections', 'Narratives', but never a 'History'. Their narrations were, however, no simple enumeration of facts or any arbitrary arrangement of information. Their very process of computing the data was an unabashed avowal of the interest of the State. They were spokesmen of an order that looked at rebellion as an aberration, a serious but

8. On British march in Bundelkhand the only two accounts are - Thomas Lowe, Central India during the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858 (London. 1860); J.H. Sylvester, Recollections of the Campaign in Malwa and Central India under Maj. Gen. Sir Hugh Rose, G.B.C. (Bombay, 1860).

temporary distraction to the perpetuation of power of the British State. The stories told were addressed to the English public with deliberate interpretation and clear stamps of indictment. Most were intended to read like sensational accounts of the valour of the English in the teeth of wild Oriental revellery in disorder and confusion. Others were more serious retrospection of the cataclysm. But all were pitted in favour of authority, of English law and order. Infact, both for these authors and their readers, there could be no neutral choice between rebellion and the State, between the Indians and the English, between the ruled and the ruler. The bias opinion was built into the very structure of the discourse disallowing any objective analysis of the uprising.

The first claims of writing a history of 1857 appeared sometime after the rebellion was totally quelled and assertive measures taken to reduce, if not eradicate, the possibility of another outbreak of a similar kind. These were attempts at encapsulating the entire movement in all the places that it surfaced, within the confines of a single exercise. The three major works of this kind, generally regarded as the most important, were those by John Kaye, Charles Ball and G.W. Forrest.⁹ Kaye's monumental work ran into five volumes, Ball's into two and Forrest's into three. The magnitude of these writings themselves speak of the amount of information each of its authors had put together. They were derived

9. John Kaye; History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8. edited by Col. Halleson. VI Vols (Connecticut, 1971. first published in 1897-98); Charles Ball; The History of the Indian Mutiny, - giving a detailed account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India, and a concise history of the Great Military events which have tended to consolidate British Empire in Hindostan. II Vols, (London and New York, 1858-59) G.W. Forrest; A History of the Indian Mutiny - Reviewed and Illustrated from Original Documents. III Vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1904-12).

principally from the official narratives of the district magistrates, other reports and correspondence, mostly printed. These works were fairly exhaustive in the sense that they contained everything that their authors knew about the rebellion, arranged to evolve a coherent pattern of the movement.

Being distanced from the episode by time, these chroniclers had the advantage of hindsight and were less fettered by the emotional prejudices of the contemporary writers. But these writers, in turn, were constrained by the prejudices of their own times, when the Raj was confirmed in its ascendancy over its Indian empire as a glowing testimony to the glory and strength of the English and their nation. Therefore while writing a history of the mutiny they ultimately compiled a catalogue of the Company's weaknesses and stages of the eventual success of the Raj. Both contents and perspectives were determined by the preoccupation with the reorganisation of the British empire in India. The rebellion of 1857 held significance merely as a disjunction, an interlude in the transition from the rule of the Company to the assumption of power by the Crown. The mistakes of the Company were the justification for the Raj ^{while} rebellion and ^{mere} the rebels were/objects in the rehearsal of power. The nature of such discourses is best summarised by Ranajit Guha, "The event does not constitute its sole content, but is the middle term between a beginning which serves as a context and an end which is at the same time a perspective linked to the next sequence. The only element that is constant in this on going series is the Empire and the policies needed to

safeguard and perpetuate it".¹⁰ The uprising in these accounts seemed to rest on the edges of the power structure in the realm of what Victor Turner describes as 'liminality' or 'marginality'. It staged a temporary reversal of status and roles of the ruler and ruled. But such inversion ultimately reinforced the structure of power leading to an unprecedented potency of the State machinery.¹¹ Underlying such thesis is the emphasis on the evolutionary aspect of the history of colonial rule in India. In comparison to the contemporary writings, later accounts are weak precisely for their perspective that deprived them of the candid details of the event so valued in the former. Thus Debi Singh in Mark Thornhill's recollections or the armed villagers in P.G.Scot's narratives are lost to Kaye, Forrest and Ball. By distilling the account of rebellion, these authors deliberately strained out elements that did not agree with their preoccupation in the continuum. To the contemporary English men and women, the rebellion and its immediacy was the concern even if evoking their open condemnation; for the later historians, the reality was the Raj and every other event held relevance only with reference to it.

To begin with, each of the three authors called his work a 'History of the Indian Mutiny'. The insurgency thus came to be branded and this very label disguised the thesis of the opinionated authors. Concerned fundamentally with identifying

10. Ranajit Guha; "The Prose of Counter - Insurgency", in Subaltern Studies II, ed. by Ranajit Guha (Delhi, 1983), p. 27.

11. Victor W. Turner; The Ritual Process - Structure and Anti-Structure (London, 1969) p.128 and pp. 167-203.

factors that could account for such a conflagration, so overwhelming, the English historians found the principal catalyst in the dissent of the soldiers. The sepoys of the Bengal army had some very tangible reasons for complaint and sought redress through protest. Kaye, Forrest and Ball admitted that the Government run by the East India Company had taken certain injudicious measures that ran contrary to the interests of the soldiers. They looked at great lengths for reasons to ascertain how and why the fidelity of the sepoys to their salt and their masters gradually transformed into animosity and dissension against them. But the purpose of such an exercise was to show where the English had gone wrong. Kaye therefore spent the first 144 pages on the administration of Dalhousie in Volume I and devoted large chunks of the same book to individual Governor-Generals and Chiefs of the armed forces, critically evaluating their moves and responses at moments of crisis. It is in the critical appraisal of their policies that lay his claims to being one of the greatest historians of British administration in India prior to 1857. Book II of the same volume is on the sepoy army and the military system in India tracing its evolution and eventual deterioration in the conditions of work which became irksome to the sepoys. G.W. Forrest agreed with Kaye both in the form and findings of his work.

In describing the outbreak of rebellion and especially the widening of its horizon to appropriate more ~~and more~~ symbols of British authority over wider area, the historians were confronted with a new phenomenon. There was a political dimension to the protest of the soldiers, accountable and

testified by the widespread uprisings of the civilian population in large parts of Northern and Central India. They failed to perceive, what their contemporaries had, the depths to which the disaffection of the people reached. Instead, their accounts looked upon the non-military aspect of the struggle as a political conspiracy hatched by the dethroned potentates who had every reasons to wish the ruin of the British Government. Thus Nana Sahib emerged as the principal conspirator and every local rebellion was seen as having been engineered by its erstwhile ruler - Laxmi Bai in Jhansi, Hasrat Mahal in Lucknow, Nana Sahib in Kanpur and such like. Constraints in their information and perception clamped their minds against looking beyond the local powerholders.

Finally, in narrating the course of the rebellion, the historians main concern was to describe the eventualities that led to the collapse of British rule and how it was reset following a series of victories of the British army over the rebels. Therefore, rebel actions were studied only where they directly challenged the structure of Government in the towns; and the movement was described by arranging a set of events that precipitated the crisis for authority. Attention was devoted more to the uprisings of the soldiers than to the protest of the people in the countryside and much more on the process by which British power was resurrected than the way it was overthrown. The counter-insurgency forces, their march, the hurdles that they had to overcome, the persistent fight of the British soldiers under the singularly superior leadership of their respective commanders occupy a large space in these works. The reader is thus told about the momentary lapse on

the part of the Government that allowed such a conflagration to take place but which could be eventually subverted by the latent strength of British authority. The rebels and their resistance were ^{thus} obscured.

Yet, as the first historians, Kaye, Ball and Forrest have a distinguished place in the historiography of 1857. Within the spectrum of their analysis and narration their books are packed closely with information, which later-day historians liberally used. Their decisive role, however, lay in setting a tradition of the way in which a history of 1857 continued to be written long after them. Description of events in 1857 read differently at the hands of different writers of diverse background and bias. But the underlying pattern arranging the facts can be delineated in many later works, from their superficial coverings of modulation and alternations. Till recently every work on the movement began with a speculation on its causes, continued to an account of the rebellion with all the stress on the mutiny, the towns and local potentates. Indians diluted the importance that the British laid on counter-insurrection but failed to discover fresh lines of enquiry; where there was an element of freshness in the works of Kaye and others, there developed a degree of sterility in those of their successors.

The immediate successors to the works of Kaye, Ball and Forrest were regional accounts of the mutiny compiled in the different district gazetteers. The uprising in the gazetteers was placed quite specifically and categorically as an event in the history of English rule in India. It was seen quite clearly

as a disjunction in the evolution of the colonial State here. Therefore, without exceptions, all the district gazetteers began their narrative of the mutiny with a uniformly, similar sentence to the effect that the district had remained tranquil until the mutiny led to chaos. The short account of the mutiny was then closed with another statement summarising the sentiments of its author; since the suppression of the mutiny, nothing occurred to disturb peace and the district remained in perfect order. This is true for E.T. Atkinson's Gazetteer of 1871 as well as those published in 1909 with D.L.Drake - Brochman as their editor.¹² In the saga of Imperialist State in India, 1857 was a serious break in its otherwise smooth evolution and growth.

The continuation of this trend of historical representation of 1857 by later writers, notably G.B.Malleson,¹³ unfortunately produced some trite works of little historical honesty and importance. They began with a preconceived view of what the movement was all about and clamped it down on a fairly stale arrangement of facts; and with the patent of their thinly supported and unconvincingly argued hypothesis they sought to explain the rebellion in all its facets. Malleson for instance, expounded at great length the conspiracy theory, arguing that the entire movement took place because of the intervention of certain conspirators who

12. E.T. Atkinson, Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India, Vol. I. (Allahabad 1874), pp. 133, 187-188, 301. D.L. Drake Broachman (ed), District Gazetteer of the United Provinces (1909), Vol. XXV, Jalaun. p. 135 & 143. Vol. XXIV, Jhansi, pp. 208 & 225. Vol. XXII, Hamirpur, p. 154. Vol. XXI, Banda, pp. 183 & 191.

13. Col. G.B. Malleson; The Indian Mutiny of 1857. (London, 1912).

provided the spark to the groundswell of discontent among the sepoys and civilians, thereby precipitating an outbreak. Malleson's account provided no new information and did not even aim at a rationally argued narrative. Instead, it reeked of the author's narrow chauvinism as the following observations on the inevitability of British success show : "It was a question of race. This race of ours has been gifted by Providence with the qualities of manliness, of endurance, of a resolution which never flags. It never willingly lets go. Its presence in England is a justification of the action all over the world, wherever it has conquered, it has planted principals of order, of justice, of good government." ¹⁴ Such unabashed admission of a very obvious prejudice and belief in the superiority of the English vis-a-vis the rebel Indians, reduce the worth of Malleson's work.

Till the 1950s, historiography of 1857 suffered from a degree of banality, the authors being embroiled in sterile debate on the nature of the conflagration on the basis of limited knowledge and even more constricted perception. Here, the Indians fared little better. Little or no attempt was made at researching new avenues of enquiry, no new facts were unearthed or new questions asked. Writers dabbled with the already known and much repeated information on the subject within the stereotyped format of causes and effect, making trite and unconvincing statements on its possible nature. Rajani kanta Gupta, in his impressive five-volumed project ¹⁵

14. Ibid. p. 410.

15. Rajanikanta Gupta; History of Sepoy War. V. Vols (Calcutta, 1910-11).

written in Bengali sometime in the late 19th century, perhaps represented the earliest Indian venture into the field of writing on 1857. Unfortunately, he was able to do little better than translate and compile the existing English works of Kaye and others. Though aware of the racial prejudices that the English writings betrayed, Gupta failed to break out of the constraints of the perception and opinions of the British. Similarly, the *Volcano or the First War of Indian Independence* by V.D.Savarkar¹⁶ can have no pretensions of being any serious piece of history. Savarkar as a nationalist politician used this uprising to prove the latent spirit of the Indians and their continuous struggle for freedom. In his opinion people rose up in arms in 1857 for the safeguard of Swadharma (their religion) and for winning back Swaraj (their kingdom) under the singular stewardship of leaders like Nana Sahib and Maulavi Azimulla who formed what he called a revolutionary party with other prominent men in Delhi and Lucknow. However sweeping and presumptuous, Savarkar's argument might have been he left the succeeding Indian historians speculating on the nationalist content of the rebels' opposition to British rule.

In the wake of the nationalist movement of the late 19th century, the revolt of 1857 was conjoined to construct another linear model. The history of imperialism was replaced by the history of nationalism and 1857 in the latter instance was taken to be the beginning rather than a rupture

16. V.D.Savarkar; The Volcano or the First War of Indian Independence (Kuala Lumpur n.d., first published in 1947).

as in the former. But once again the content and perspective were determined by politics that was extraneous to the rebellion of 1857. Its specific constituents by themselves held little interest but for their assumed and derived links with another continuum, another subject, the nationalist movement. Elements comprising the insurgency in 1857 were now freely picked upon and altered to agree with the overall pattern outlined by the struggle for freedom against the British Raj.

The first properly researched history using archival documents appeared no less a century after the rebellion. To commemorate the centenary of the movement, the Government of India deputed the noted historian, S.N.Sen, to write an authoritative account of the revolt and 'Eighteen Fifty-seven' was released on the 10th May 1957.¹⁷ R.C.Mazumdar brought out 'The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857' the same year. Belonging to the same genre of historiographical tradition was the 'History of Freedom Movement in India' in four volumes by Dr. Tarachand published in 1961. Of the three, 'Eighteen Fifty-seven' is certainly the richest in terms of information and Sen scanned through a large amount of contemporary reports and correspondence that appeared on the subject.

These writings were conceived shortly after India's independence following half a century of what apparently seemed an organised, well-directed political agitation led by the educated elites. It was a wholly successful movement in so

17. S.N.Sen, Eighteen Fifty-Seven, (Delhi, 1957); R.C.Majumdar, The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857 (Calcutta, 1957). Tarachand, History of the Freedom Movement in India 4 Vols. (Delhi, 1961-72).

far as it led to the freedom of the country from foreign domination, fashioned along lines of modern, organised party - politics. In contrast, the rebellion appeared 'unorganised', 'spontaneous', 'back-ward looking struggle' of an almost uncontrolled frenzied kind: and more important it had failed. To these historians therefore, while the mustered challenge to British rule was commendable the form in which it was mobilised and expressed certainly warranted criticism. Tarachand sums up the sentiments of his contemporaries in the following words : "The failure of the Revolt was almost a foregone conclusion. It was actuated by pure negations.. It was not inspired by a positive creative idea: it did not entertain either the vision of a higher social order or of a higher political system. It was a transient intoxication and not a settled permanent transformation of the will of the people. As it was an almost spontaneous episodic outburst, there was no stable well-ordered organisation behind the movement as a whole ..." ¹⁸ The historians' verdict on the insurgency was thus an open indictment of the nature of its outbreak, on grounds of ethics. Judging the course of events from their own elitist, educated points of view and looking at them from the prisms of modern political upbringing, Sen remarked not without abhorrence, "It was an inhuman fight between people driven insane by hatred and fear". ¹⁹ The historians admitted that it was much more than a military mutiny though much of their accounts concentrated on the dissension of the soldiers. "It had its origin in sepoy discontent and derived its strength from the

18. Tarachand, op.cit., p. 106.

19. Sen, Op.cit., p. 414.

widespread disaffection among the civil population", ²⁰ was the way S.N.Sen described the rebellion. Majumdar acknowledged that in most localities the mutiny of the sepoy was followed by a widespread disturbance among the civil population, but continued in the very next sentence, "We may easily discern several prominent elements in these promiscuous risings. The first was the notorious goonda element of the locality ...(they) were naturally joined by other elements of similar nature, and there are some grounds to suppose that most, if not the whole, of plunder and massacre was the work of these people who formed the scum of the population". ²¹

The historians could never approve of the expressed manifestations of the protest and thus there was no question of looking beyond them for an analysis of the varied political content of the movement.

The works of the three historians were thus an outcome of 'past consciousness' being 'conditioned by the present'. ²²

The rebellion was reviewed in a perspective determined by the experience of the nationalist movement ultimately leading to the establishment of a modern bourgeois State, working within the framework of a constitutional and parliamentary structure of Government. This was the model against which the rebellion of 1857 was placed and since it was largely in dissonance with the approved pattern, the historians were ill at ease. Interesting are the questions that S.N.Sen posed in his last

20. Ibid, p. 405.

21. Majumdar, Op.cit., p. 56.

22. Ranajit Guha, Op.cit., p. 33.

chapter,²³ questions that naturally arose in the mind of a historian as a product of a certain upbringing and experience, questions totally irrelevant to the rebel in 1857. The context in which the historian wrote and that in which the rebel operated were so much at variance that there could be no dialogue and no comprehension of the contradicting points of view. For Sen therefore it was significant that a 'determined minority' took 'active part' in a revolt or revolution' while the overwhelming majority' remained passive²⁴ and this determined minority took the rebellion towards the path of a war of independence"... for there is not the slightest doubt that the rebels wanted to get rid of the alien government and restore the old order of which the king of Delhi was the rightful representative".²⁵ The historian was seeking an order in the rebellion that would agree with his own notions of politics. Thus Sen writes, "The Mutiny was inevitable.. No dependant nation can for ever reconcile itself to foreign domination".²⁶ He looked for unity in the movement and found in religion 'the most potent force in the absence of territorial patriotism'..."²⁷

Yet, the rebellion for all it chose to resist could not stand the test of the second criterion that the historians set. Its political objective didnot conform to their notion of a modern State - and here even the British Raj had an edge over what

23. Sen, Op.cit., p. 398.

24. Ibid, p. 411.

25. Ibid,

26. Ibid, p. 417.

27. Ibid, p. 412.

appeared a retrograde movement. "The Mutiny leaders would have set the clock back", Sen wrote, "they would have done away with the new reforms, with the new order, and gone back to the good old days when a commoner could not expect equal justice with the noble, when the tenants were at the mercy of the talukdars, and when theft was punished with mutilation. In short, they wanted a counter-revolution".²⁸ Tarachand too discerned in the rising of 1857", ... last attempt of the medieval order - to halt the process of dissolution and to recover its lost status. It is true that the order was decadent ..." ²⁹ The fragmented nature of the rebellion on the other hand, suggested to Majumdar that different elements participated to serve their own interests being carried away by the delusion that the mutineers had extinguished the British rule for good.³⁰

The same year that S.N.Sen and R.C.Majumdar brought out their monographs, appeared a major work on 1857 by S.B.Chaudhury, one of the most perceptive historians on the subject. He called his work 'Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies', thereby anticipating the emphasis of his study. This was the first critical analysis of the movement and certainly the first attempt at dissecting the complex strands of political actions that converged into the conflagration. Outlining his approach to the subject, Chaudhury wrote, "The so-called sepoy mutiny of 1857 has an internal consistency if we regard it as both a mutiny and a rebellion, unmistakably united, the mutiny resulting in

28. Ibid., pp. 412-13.

29. Tarachand, Op.cit., p. 43.

30. Majumdar, Op.cit., p. 58.

popular disturbances. The underlying rebellion being less obvious than the military excesses, its nature and limitations merit exposition. The mere fact that the government establishments were destroyed, records burnt, and telegraphic lines cut off did not help to raise the mutiny of troops to the rank of a civil rebellion any more than the application of the name revolution to the events of 1857-59 could make a history of that movement feasible. The rebellion of the civil populace which existed must have been of a nature more fundamental than that implied in the currency of a political term".³¹ Such an appraisal was unquestionably a major break-through in the hackneyed traditions of historiography on 1857 and was a precursor to much of what was written later. Not only was Chaudhuri's work seminal in that it established beyond question that 1857 saw as much of a civil upsurge as a military mutiny, it also presaged the growing inclination towards a socio-economic analysis of the causes of disaffection. This was not only a refreshing change, it also held out hopeful possibilities for the historiography of the rebellion long invalidated by stilted colonial bias. Chaudhuri thus discovered in the uprising, sepoys fighting for fear of castes, chiefs fighting for their kingdoms, the landlords for their estates, the mass for fear of conversion and agrarian grievances, all in their own way against a common adversary, the English. He was the first historian to perceive that such a widespread rebellion was fed by multiple sources of political actions and disaffection. "The grievances

31. S.B. Chaudhuri : Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutines (1857-59), (Calcutta 1957), p. XVI.

under which the population laboured, the hatred of the British amongst the higher classes, the restiveness of the agricultural classes as manifested in the disturbances of the earlier period, and not any cause, singly considered - must be regarded as the true source of revolt".³²

S.B. Chaudhuri was certainly the first historian to study the rebellion specifically for all its worth with a degree of neutrality that weighed heavily towards sympathy. Very significantly, he discerned the multiplicity of actions and articulation of disaffection. But while ordering the facts, Chaudhuri knit another pattern of linearity and continuity. He found two threads to tie up the fractures and overlay them by the political rationale of his own time. He placed all the blocks of civil rebellion into the consolidated structure of an anti-British and anti-colonial movement running through feudal channels. The feudal magnates brought together "diverse people of all classes who made common cause with them in complete disregard of the forces of estrangement which might otherwise exist in the social and economic life".³³ Possibilities of interests clashing were blotted out by the need to resist foreign rule that impinged on all alike. The outcome was the foundation of a national front, the insurgency ultimately symbolising the overt expressions of a national outburst against British Government rendered intense by reasons of socio-religious and economic discontent.³⁴ Chaudhuri also found in the civil rebellion of 1857 distinct traces of links with the many uprising of the pre-mutiny period and regarded the two not

32. Ibid,

33. Ibid, p. 297.

34. Ibid, pp. 298, pp. 296-97 & 299.

only connected in a long chain of causes but in some cases one being the continuation of the other.³⁵ By assimilating past protests, 1857 in Chaudhury's opinion, was "... objectively an anticipation of the future and not a mere recoil to the past".³⁶ It was the real, if remote, approach to the freedom movement of India of a later age.

S.E. Chaudhury could not spare the rebellion of 1857 from being ranged with an array of events which put together conformed to the modern model of a political movement. With all his sympathies, the historian failed to grant the rebellion the distinction of non-conformity, an event complete by itself.

Eric Stokes's 'The Peasant and the Raj' refuted all existing historiographical models of 1857 and investigated for the first time the rebellion through the close lens of a micro-study. Concentrating on Bulandshahr, Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar and applying his findings to some other districts of Upper and Central Doab, Stokes unearthed a groundswell of discontent among the peasantry. Stokes rejected the paradigms within which imperialist and nationalist historians placed the rebellion of 1857 and instead borrowed models tested by historians to study popular revolts in Africa, thereby lending a degree of professional sophistication to the analysis of the event. He found in the rebellion distinct marks of what was categorised as a 'post-pacification revolt', an intervening phase between the stage of primary resistance of a traditional society and that of secondary 'resistance' embarked on^a large scale through secular and

35. Ibid, p. XVI-XVII.

36. Ibid, p. 298.

religious associations. This 'Post - pacification revolt' was precipitated by the circumstance when "the ... formal power superstructure having been wholly or partially dismantled at pacification, colonial rule engages society more directly and evokes in consequence a more widespread reaction should a revolutionary conjuncture occur. But the reaction will be a rally of heterogeneous elements, reflecting compartmentalism and uneven development, and held together loosely by an anti- 37 foreigner sentiment expressed in the form of religious ideology". Within this theoretical construct, Stokes delved deep into the different patterns of land tenures and their varied reactions to the intervention of British revenue settlements and to the introduction of commercialised agriculture, in order to comprehend the internal mechanisms of widespread popular discontent. He found in such popular uprisings, complex reflection of varied shades of peasant resentment. After much refined processing of information, Stokes however reached a fairly simplified and by now well patented conclusion. The rural revolt in 1857 was essentially, elitist in character as the 'mass of population' "... played little part in the fight or at most tamely followed the behests of its caste superiors".³⁸ This was as much to suggest that traditional feudal ties of loyalty - those of caste or property-were the crucial factors that mobilised the forces of rebellion. Such an explanation overlooked the complex strata of rural society and the different layered response to the events of 1857. Stokes eventually attended to the rationale behind the initiative

37. Eric Stokes : The Peasant and the Raj - Studies in agrarian society and peasant rebellion in colonial India (London 1978), p. 129.

38. Ibid, p. 185.

of landlords and lineage heads. Leaning heavily on an economic explanation he found answers to most queries in the uneven state of relative prosperity vis-a-vis relative decadence that different landed magnates faced under the new British revenue system. Put simply, Stokes argument ran thus : where landlords failed to draw benefits from the new British system or in areas which were denied the advantages of irrigation and their agricultural innovations, the aggrieved aristocracy flared readily into rebellion, carrying the entire country with them. On the other hand, a thriving magnate was more or less committed to authority and was the crucial factor in containing rural disaffection in the immediate countryside.

'The Peasants and the Raj' was certainly an exceptional study of 1857 in terms of the methodology it applied for micro dissection. But even Stokes sought an order in the heterogeneous elements comprising the movement and unable to find one internal to the rebellion imposed another derived from his own perception. The uprising was bracketed in a phase categorised as 'post-pacification'. This very category was defined with reference to modern, secular politics and represented its preceding and less organised form. Once again 1857 was merely a phase, the contents by themselves holding little import but as a fore-runners of a sequel legitimised by the experience of the 20th century. Like the movement, the rebels too could not stand on their own feet but on crutches offered by the rural elites. The politics of the people at varied levels of society was thus subsumed in the pre-conceived scheme that was born out^{of} the modern historian's logic and that focused the lens of the camera to capture the event from above and from a distance leaving a wide

gap of incompatibility.

The above review certainly does not exhaust all writings on 1857; it merely outlined some of the major strands that distinguished a variety of historical accounts, only to place the central preoccupation of the present thesis. This thesis seeks to understand the actions and political vision of the people who made rebellion in 1857, very little of which come through from the available literature. Historians of 1857 have tended to freeze the events and the actors into a monolithic pattern, trying out different labels and brand-names to suit their analysis. Once the debate over the nature of the uprising was settled and mutiny and civil rebellion came to be generally accepted as two facets of the movement, historians' concern was diverted to indicate the principal catalysts and the prime movers. Whether a regional study or a survey of the entire movement, every historian betrayed an inclination towards reducing all the factors into a one-dimensional formula. Civil rebellion has been seen as an overt expression of discontent that the dispossessed rural magnates felt towards the British. The rest of the population though equally disaffected rose in rebellion essentially in response to and under the leadership of their overlords and therefore their political actions in 1857-58 did not call for separate treatment. Such perception of the rebellion assumed a degree of linearity in the actions of the rebels, whereby one dominant strand of politics was taken to have subsumed the others. The movement therefore emerged through such writings as essentially elitist in its character and direction, a

deduction of the historians mind seeking an order, a unity in the rebellion. But can the experience and politics of a fractured society that confronted an alien rule be reduced to the disaffection and rebellion of any one section alone? Should one assume that these landed chiefs commanded the loyalty of the people economically and socially below them, so much as to move them into rebellion in the absence of the latter's initiative? Assured of the truth of such an assertion, is it justified to exclude from historical study all those who do not fall within the category of feudal overlords, regarded as the natural leaders in society and rebellion? How do we in that case explain instances where peasants in remote villages struck at authority first or their persistent resistance to British efforts at resetting 'order' or their refusal to pay taxes even if otherwise not being overtly rebellious?

One major lacuna in the existing accounts is that none sought to study the actions and their varied motifs, of people standing at dissimilar levels in the economic and social hierarchy in those crucial months of 1857 and in some instances months of 1858 and 1859. This is precisely where the present study begins and herein lies the justification for analysing the course of rebellion in a particular region. Bundelkhand stood on the periphery of British empire in North India just as it stood on the margins of historical attention. This is why the present focus has turned to this little known division of Uttar Pradesh. The history of rebellion in 1857 here had laid partially hidden by its wild undulating terrain, obscured by the intersecting ravines

and streams. A recent book on the revolt in Bundelkhand by S.N.Sinha³⁹ failed to throw any fresh light on questions this enquiry poses itself.

This thesis begins with fractures, assuming heterogeneity in the experiences and perceptions, in the ends and ambitions of the people. By putting together their diverse actions, it wishes to recreate the years of rebellion in Bundelkhand with the ultimate hope of being able to understand the nature of the uprising better not as a uniform, one - dimensional event but as they appeared, fractured and divided.

The thesis takes up each section of the population and narrates the course of the rebellion by piecing together the response of people at every level and taking the responses to be decisive indices to the comprehension of the political consciousness of the actors. Sepoys, regional potentates, landlords and peasants evinced divergences in their behaviour, their actions, often in their loyalties and animosities and in their commitments and ambivalence. Some of the questions, this thesis asks are : How did different sets of people with diverse experiences and perceptions react in a situation where authority had been replaced? Were the actions of all members of a given section uniform or were there variations? Can these actions be accounted for by a straight laced socio-economic explanation of each section? Where did the political actions of these varied cross-section of people converge, how and why?

39. S.N.Sinha, The revolt of 1857 in Bundelkhand (Lucknow 1982).

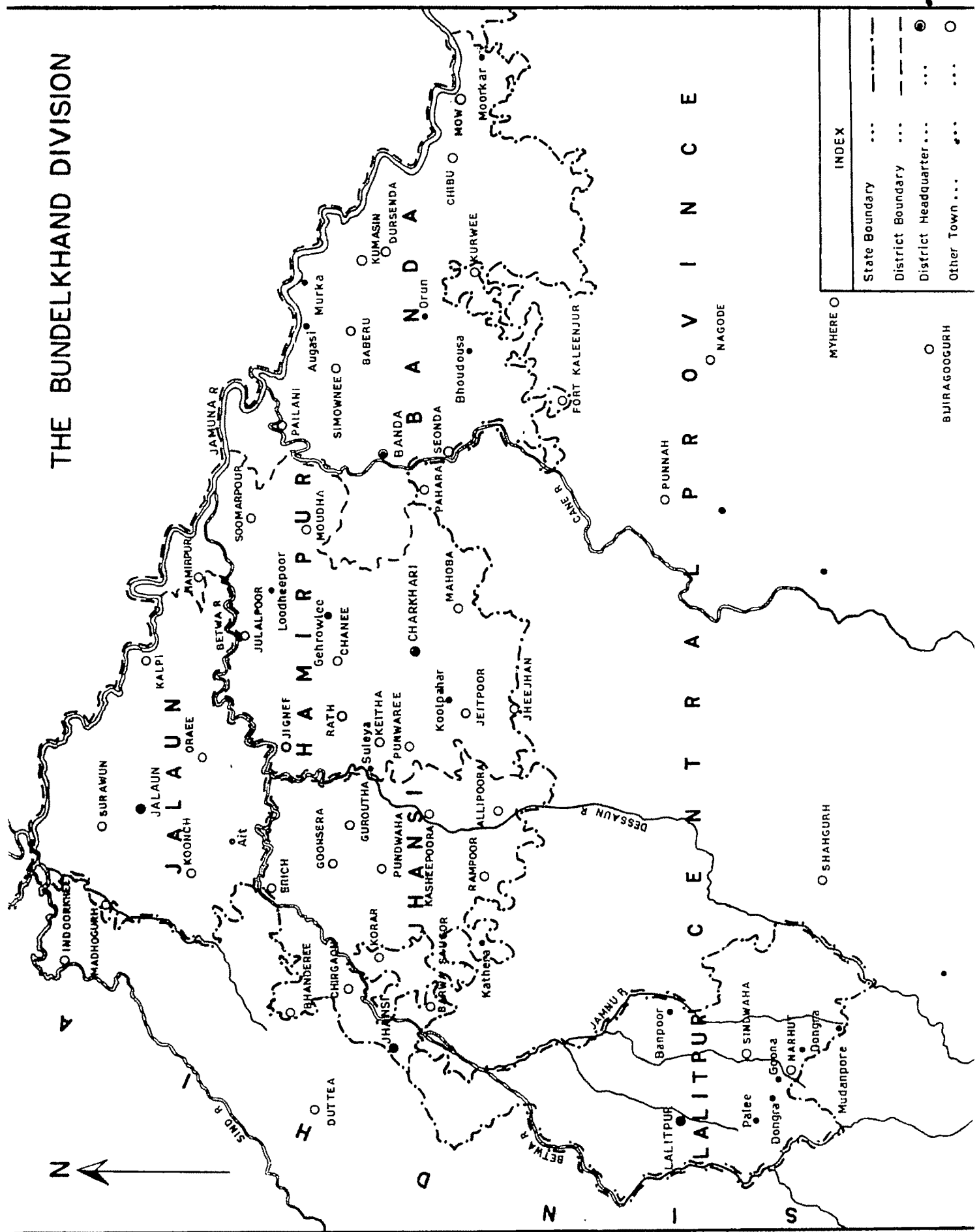
In this context how did the sepoy mutiny relate to the civil rebellion? What were the ~~roles~~ that these sepoys played in a region they did not belong to? How do we explain the loyalties and antagonisms of different people to different, often opposing forces? The purpose of these questions is ultimately to make a modest attempt at treading into the domain of the rebel's mind.

To anticipate some of the major arguments, this thesis takes two opposing poles as fixed i.e. the forces of authority and those of rebellion. In 1857, the order was reversed as rebellion took the place of authority but ultimately the latter was able to reset itself after a determined suppression of the former. This replacement and reestablishment of a state is the skeleton of the story and perhaps the only even outlines. Within it while authority stood as a unified block, politics of rebellion was composed of multiple strands, a braid of diverse elements. In Bundelkhand, the rebellion was clearly fought at varying levels, denoting different degrees of participation, with different shades of expressions of people who stood at dissimilar social, economic and even political positions. These diverse responses tied up at particular points to give the appearance of a unilinear pattern of conflagration. But it was a pattern made up of a mosaic of myriad people and their political perceptions and ambitions.

The first two chapters describe the structured society and its interactions with British rule over the period of its occupation upto 1857. Then separate chapters take up different sections of rebels, beginning with the sepoys and

ending with the peasants to show the complex forms of mobilisation and the varied motifs of political articulation. The thesis closes with the reestablishment of authority that rebellion had negated. Finally, an attempt is made at tying up the nature of a regional rebellion to the broader movement that shook the foundations of British rule over a much wider spectrum of territory.

THE BUNDELKHAND DIVISION



INDEX	
State Boundary	---
District Boundary	---
District Headquarter	●
Other Town	○

MYHERE ○
 BUIRAGOOGURH ○

PUNNAH ○
 P R O V I N C E

DESAIN R.
 CENTRAL

JAMUN R.
 LALITPUR

Chapter - IBundelkhand - the country and its people.

This chapter intends to describe the division of Bundelkhand and its multi-layered political and social structure. Much in the fashion of a government gazetteer, it has compiled information on the people who stood at dissimilar levels enjoying different degrees of power and prerogatives within a normative framework of inter-relationships that was flexible enough to permit a certain amount of readjustment and reshuffling. This was the structure that confronted British rule and stood in contrast to the English notions of a centralised political order. The purpose of such an account is to provide a backdrop to the basic ideological incompatibility between the existing system and the changes brought about in the 19th century, changes that threatened to freeze the structure and deprive it of its internal mechanisms of permutations. When thus examined, the incompatibility explained the widely shared perception of the people to whom everything related to the English appeared alien and extraneous to their tradition and experiences.

The Bundelkhand division of Uttar Pradesh (formerly the North Western Provinces) lay on the south of river Jamuna between 27 and 24 degrees latitude and 78 and 84 degrees longitude. Its north and north-eastern boundaries were determined by the course of Jamuna, its western limits marked by the erstwhile Gwalior State while its very irregular and broken southern and south - eastern borders merged into the Central Provinces (modern Madhya Pradesh). In 1857,

Bundelkhand comprised of the four British governed districts of Banda, Hamirpur, Jalaun and Jhansi, the latter included the Lalitpur sub-division. These districts lay interspersed with a host of small independent States, their mutual boundaries overlapping each other. Jalaun, Hamirpur and Banda stood side by side in that order from west to east, along the southern fringe of Jamuna, while Jhansi with Lalitpur on the south-west corner of Jalaun tapered down to resemble a narrow V.

The topography of the division was anything but regular. Its southern fringe across all the districts was largely broken country with lowlying hills leading up to the lower Vindhyan ranges. The north was comparatively more level and supported a relatively regular cultivation and habitation. A number of rivers flowing almost parallel to each other cut across Bundelkhand diagonally. The Sind on its south-western boundary separated it from Gwalior. A few miles east, Pahuj a tributary of Sind outlined the western side of Jalaun except in places where the district projected beyond the stream. Almost parallel about thirty or forty miles further east, the course of Betwa separated Jalaun from Hamirpur while its tributary Dhasan formed a fork between Jhansi and Hamirpur. More to the east, flowed Ken along the boundaries of Hamirpur and Banda meeting Jamuna after a course of 230 miles. On the right of Ken in the district of Banda ran two small streams, Bagain and Paisuni from the south west to the north-east into Jamuna. Lined along both sides of the main streams and often extending for five to seven miles inland were deep ravines and very broken stony land. The tracts bordering the rivers Betwa,

Pahuj and Dhasan were most singularly marked by ravines and claimed the largest percentage of uncultivable land in the whole of Bundelkhand.¹

1.1. The people and their history :

Bundelkhand as a whole did not constitute a single political unit and was only peripherally integrated within the imperial political system. Geographically as well as politically it stood on the margins of the centralised structure of power. It never formed a unified kingdom of a kind that Bernard Cohn defines as the secondary level of political system represented by successor States, that emerged with the dissolution of Mughal power.² This allowed for the growth and consolidation of indigenous powerholders and local dynasties commanding regional political control over fragments of Bundelkhand. The region was thus politically splintered into small Rajadoms that were loosely incorporated into the Mughal framework of power through rituals of allegiance.³ Even when the Marathas took over a major share of territory in Bundelkhand, it was not included in the Peshwa's directly

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1. E.T. Atkinson, Statistical Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India. Vol. I (Allahabad, 1874), p.1; D.L. Drake Brochman (ed), District Gazetteer of the United Provinces, Jalaun, Vol. XXV (Allahabad, 1909), p.1; A. Cadell, Settlement Report for Banda District (Allahabad, 1881) pp. 1-2.
 2. Bernard S. Cohn, Political system in Eighteenth Century India : The Banaras Region, Journal of American Oriental Society Vol. 82. 1962. pp. 312-320.
 3. Ibid.

governed dominion. Instead, Maratha governors deputed from Poona set up autonomous units of rule formally legitimised by the Peshwa. Locally, the control over land and occupations was in the hands of caste lineages and brotherhoods or individual families of jagirdars and maafidars with varying prescriptions of power and privileges, usually derived from the regional overlords. Divided vertically and horizontally thus, different levels of power units ranging from the kin-based acephalous groupsto more evenly defined regional States were held together in a normative structure of power relationship. The structure allowed conflicts, displacement and replacement but always survived disintegration by bonds of allegiance and dependence with which each level was tied to the other. Whatever the source of legitimisation each derived its power from, the multiple strands of loyalties and support cutting across one another, maintained a degree of balance and equilibrium that checked power dissipation. However, there was no single pattern of the evolution of this political structure in Bundelkhand. There was an overarching framework, but one, that could not be defined or encapsulated by the parameters of any single political mould.

The early history of Bundelkhand is closely linked with the rise and consolidation of power by the Rajputs in different parts of India in the period following Harshavardhana's death. Gaharwars and Pariharas (or Pratiharas) were among the first Rajput clans to colonise and rule chunks of territory in

southern and western Bundelkhand.⁴ The rise of the Chandela kingdom between the 9th and the 12th centuries covering a large stretch that roughly included a good part of southern Hamirpur, Jhansi and Banda, appropriated the political prescription of the Pratihars. Subordinated and subjugated, the latter settled into the status of second ranking rural power elites. The head of the clan retained a small independent state at Jigni, in the north-western corner of tahsil Rath in Hamirpur. The rest were scattered over a region that overspread the eastern tahsils of Jhansi and the western tahsils of Hamirpur.⁵

The disintegration of the Chandel kingdom began when in 1182 A.D. Prithviraj Chauhan of Delhi defeated the Chandels and occupied Mahoba. Subsequently, the Muslims occupied towns like Kalpi (north Jalaun), Mahoba (in south Hamirpur) and Kalinjar (south Banda) in the 13th Century.⁶ Although occasionally, imperial armies were sent from Delhi to this region, it was never directly controlled by the Central administration till the reign of Akbar.

The Muslim conquest of North India in the 13th century caused a serious dislocation and dispersal of the Rajputs. Some migrated and moving out from the centre, scattered and settled down in the peripheries. This was the time when Bundelkhand saw the emergence and rise of indigenous Rajput clans

4. D.L.Drake Brochman(ed), Dist. Gazetteer of the United Provinces, Jhansi, Vol.XXIV (Allahabad, 1909) p. 181; Hamirpur, Vol.XXII. pp.124-125; W.Crooke, Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces. Vol.II. (Reprinted, Delhi, 1974) p. 372.

5. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), pp. 126 & 71.

6. Ibid, pp. 134 & 138.

consolidating power over their immediate dominion. Among others, the clans that settled here in this period, were Bundelas, Mauhars, Bais, Guars, Kuchwahars and Baghels and colonised different parts of the region. It was the Bundelas who eventually rose to consolidate effective power over much of this region and give it, its name.⁷

The Bundela ascendancy evolved over the 14th and the 15th centuries. By the 16th century, they had carved out for themselves a fairly large principality that stretched roughly from river Pahuj in the west to Mahoba in the east. In course of time it was further extended to cover the entire region between Sind and Ken. Much of Bundela greatness can be traced from the time of Raja Rudr Pratap who came to power in 1507 and founded the city of Orcha. His other brothers were apportioned jagirs for their support, their numbers proliferating to form estates occupying the second rung in the hierarchy of power.

In the systematic distribution of territories into subahs and sarkars undertaken by Akbar, the whole of Bundelkhand was reckoned in the imperial dominions and paid its contribution to the royal exchequer. The four districts fell under separate sarkars owing direct allegiance to the Mughal throne and continued to be so till Aurangzeb's reign.

7. For the myth that grew around the origins of the Bundelas refer Capt. W.R. Pogson, History of the Bundelas. Parts I & II (1828 reprinted, 1974): Lalkavi Goretala Purohita, Chattrā Prakash ed. by Mahendra Pratapa Simha (New Delhi, 1973).

The independent Rajput Chiefs of the Bundela principality of Orcha and smaller Chandela units of power in the east around Mahoba and Rath, were also formally appropriated within the Mughal paramountcy in the reign of Akbar.⁸ They were expected to pay personal homage to the Emperor as a token of subservience and send regular tribute or peshkash. In terms of their relationship with the Mughal State, these Chiefs could be categorised as being peshkashi as sending tribute appeared to be the fundamental, if not the only, bond between them and the Emperor.⁹ The Rajput Chiefs of Bundelkhand were essentially leaders of clans with sprawling linkages and support. Interference and imposition from the Imperial State over their rights and prerogatives generally provoked a determined resistance from the Chiefs who carried the support of the entire clan.¹⁰ The experience of the Mughals in Bundelkhand, therefore, was not one of easy assumption of authority, and for all practical purposes, the Chiefs here remained autonomous in their areas.¹¹

The Bundela Chiefs, thus, remained in effective control over their immediate dominions and their resistance to undue imperial imposition was not infrequent. By this time also, the Bundelas had proliferated in numbers and different smaller units of power exclusive of Orcha emerged. Jahangir divided

8. A.R.Khan, Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar (Simla, 1977) pp. 146-148 & 156-160.

9. Ibid, p. 210.

10. Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740 (Delhi, 1972) p. XXI

11. A.R.Khan, Op.cit., pp. 146-148 & 156-160.

western Bundelkhand into the two kingdoms of Orcha and Chanderi. Another descendant of Rudr Pratap founded the state of Datia while yet a fourth base grew with Mahoba as the centre under the leadership of Champat Rai. It was to Champat Rai and his son Chatrasal Bundela that much of the second phase of Bundela ascendancy over this region can be ascribed. Taking advantage of Aurangzeb's long absence from the North and the rapid disorganisation that set in, in the imperial possessions of Bundelkhand, Chatrasal occupied south and east of Lalitpur, Panna, Kalinjar, hill forts in the east, and before long the whole of the Banda and Hamirpur districts fell into his hands. In 1703, crossing the Dhasan on the west, Chatrasal extended his control over the districts of Jhansi and Jalaun. Bahadur Shah eventually confirmed to Chatrasal all the possessions he had won.

In the reign of Farukshiyar, an extensive tract spread over northern Bundelkhand was granted as jagir to Muhammad Khan Bangash, the Nawab of Farruckabad. The Bundelas persistently resisted the Nawab's attempt at occupying their terrain and in 1729-30, Bangash's forces were eventually defeated and expelled.

In their struggle against the Muslim forces, Bundelas were assisted by Baji Rao I, the Maratha Peshwa. Following their victory, Chatrasal and Baji Rao came to an agreement whereby one-third of Bundela possessions was transferred to the Marathas. The rest was to remain in control of Chatrasal's successors. The portion that was given to the Peshwa comprised the entire

region west of Dhasan, excluding portions that belonged to the Rajas of Orcha and Datia.

Political unity once again crumbled after Chatrasal's death. While the west was given away to the Marathas, the east was divided into two separate states. The Panna Raj comprising Kalinjar and adjoining areas covering large parts of the Banda district, fell to Chatrasal's oldest son Hardi Sah; and the Jaitpur Raj covering most of Hamirpur was taken over by his second son Jagat Raj.¹²

Political power at the level of the regional potentates in short came to be shared by the Bundelas and the Marathas. Naru Shankar led the Marathas to found the state of Jhansi from what legitimately were theirs with the addition of areas annexed from the adjoining kingdoms of Orcha and Datia. Another Maratha deputy was set up at Kalpi to take care of Jalaun. Kunch was given to the Holkar of Indore and remained with him till 1805. Gobind Rao and his brother Bala Rao were appointed to take charge of Jalaun. A few years after Govind Rao's death, the jurisdiction was divided between the latter's son Gangadhar Govind and Bala Rao. Gangadhar Govind established the Jalaun state while Bala Rao assumed independent authority over Gurserai. Maratha occupation of Bundelkhand was thus different from the process of slow conquest in Malwa as described by Steward Gordon.¹³

12. J.N.Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol.III (Calcutta, 1964) pp. 226-227.

13. Steward N. Gordon, 'The slow conquest: Administrative Integration of Malwa into the Maratha Empire, 1720-1760,' Modern Asian Studies, Vol.11. No.1, 1977. pp. 1-40.

In Malwa after long Maratha presence in the region, by continuous raids and gradually enfeebling local resistance, were they able to bring it within their political and economic fabric; the Marathas acquired portions of Bundelkhand simply by virtue of a formal transfer of territories.

A tussle for power between the Bundelas and the Marathas began over Chanderi. In 1811, a major part of the district was occupied by the Scindia of Gwalior. In 1842, the Bundela descendant finally took up residence at Banpur and assumed the title of Raja leaving the rest to Gwalior.

In the east, hopeless dissensions among Chatrasal's successors led to the division of Jaitpur Raj into the kingdoms of Banda, Chirkhari, the jagir of Sarila and Jaitpur itself, each held independently by members of Chatrasal's family. Among themselves, they occupied the whole of Hamirpur and a large part of Banda, except Mahoba and Kalinjar, which were a part of the Panna Raj. Similar dispute began over the succession of the Panna Kingdom.

The last to make a bid for power in Bundelkhand were two soldiers of fortune, Anupgir Himmatt Bahadur, a Gosain and Ali Bahadur, an illegitimate son of Peshwa Baji Rao I. Their first combined attack in 1791 put an end to the Raj of Banda and after several contests, Ali Bahadur, by the end of the 18th century, occupied most of the area in the districts of Banda and Hamirpur.¹⁴

14. The entire history of Bundelkhand recounted from D.G. Jhansi, Vol.XXIV, Jalaun, Vol.XXV, Hamirpur, Vol.XXII, Banda, Vol.XXI (Allahabad, 1909) pp. 180-199, 115-128, 123-151, 157-177.

Within the broad framework of the evolution of regional kingdoms and potentates were interwoven patterns of periodic colonisation and assumption of land and rights by less powerful Rajput and non-Rajput caste and clan-groups. At different points of time, under dissimilar historical circumstances and conjunctions, various people came to live here eventually to be absorbed into the over all political structure with its internal divisions and fragmentation. These different patterns of colonisation and consolidation of land at a lower level, can be very broadly grouped under four heads.

The first pattern was directly related to the development of the regional power holders. Clanmen, kinsmen and followers of the Chiefs, in the wake of the latter's ascendancy came to control land as maafidars, jagirdars, ubaridars and small or big landlords. Sometimes, as was often among the Bundelas, these local landed elites were break away spinners from the main ruling family. Often some members were apportioned lands like the jagirs of Baoni in Hamirpur and Kirwi in Southern Banda.

The brahmin migration and settlement in Bundelkhand always followed in the heels of political colonisation by one or the other major groups. Most of them accompanied the Rajputs as purohits while others came with the Marathas.¹⁵ Never rulers themselves, the brahmins were important as agents for legitimisation of the newly - founded authority of the

15. D.G. Banda, Vol.XXI (1909), p. 92; E.T.Atkinson, Op.cit., p. 266.

different political upstarts. In their crucial roles, they amassed economic privileges and remained an important caste group both as landlords and tenants.

In the second kind of settlement, clan and caste groups were driven into Bundelkhand by adverse situations outside. Waves of such migration periodically took place over the course of time as different groups of people settled in different areas to form local, rural elites, village - based landholders and tenants. Thus emerged myriad patches of settlements of different Rajput clans - the Kuchwahas, the Baghels, Sengars, the Paramaras, colloquially called Panwars or Puars, the Bais, Dikshits, Mauhars, Bagris and Janwars.

The third pattern involved those who were left behind as a kind of residual effect of the periodic, even if short-lived, intrusion of political power from outside. The Chauhan Rajputs who settled in Bundelkhand in the period of political uncertainty after the downfall of the Chandels, may have been purposely sent here by Prithviraj Chauhan to keep his newly conquered territories in subjection. In course of time, they perhaps spread out over other regions. The Muslim migrants and converts were most notable reminders of such foreign penetration. Their presence in Bundelkhand can be ascribed totally to the Muslim conquest and occupation of this region. Just as the Muslim power did not spread wide or strike deep roots, the Muslims here did not proliferate either. They congregated in the urban centres and administrative towns and rarely spread out to the villages. Over ninety percent of them were Sunnis with a handful of Shias. They were drawn from

different castes and sub-clans but none in great strength. Most of the Muslims of Bundelkhand were converts and immigrants among them were not very significant.¹⁶

Lastly, within the political context, the consolidation and domination of one group was often at the cost of the diminution of status and power of the existing powerholders. The erstwhile Pratihara rulers were reduced into coparcenary landed communities. The Khangars who lorded over large areas of Bundelkhand in the intervening period between the Chandel and the Bundela rule, in course of time found themselves as lowly menial workers.

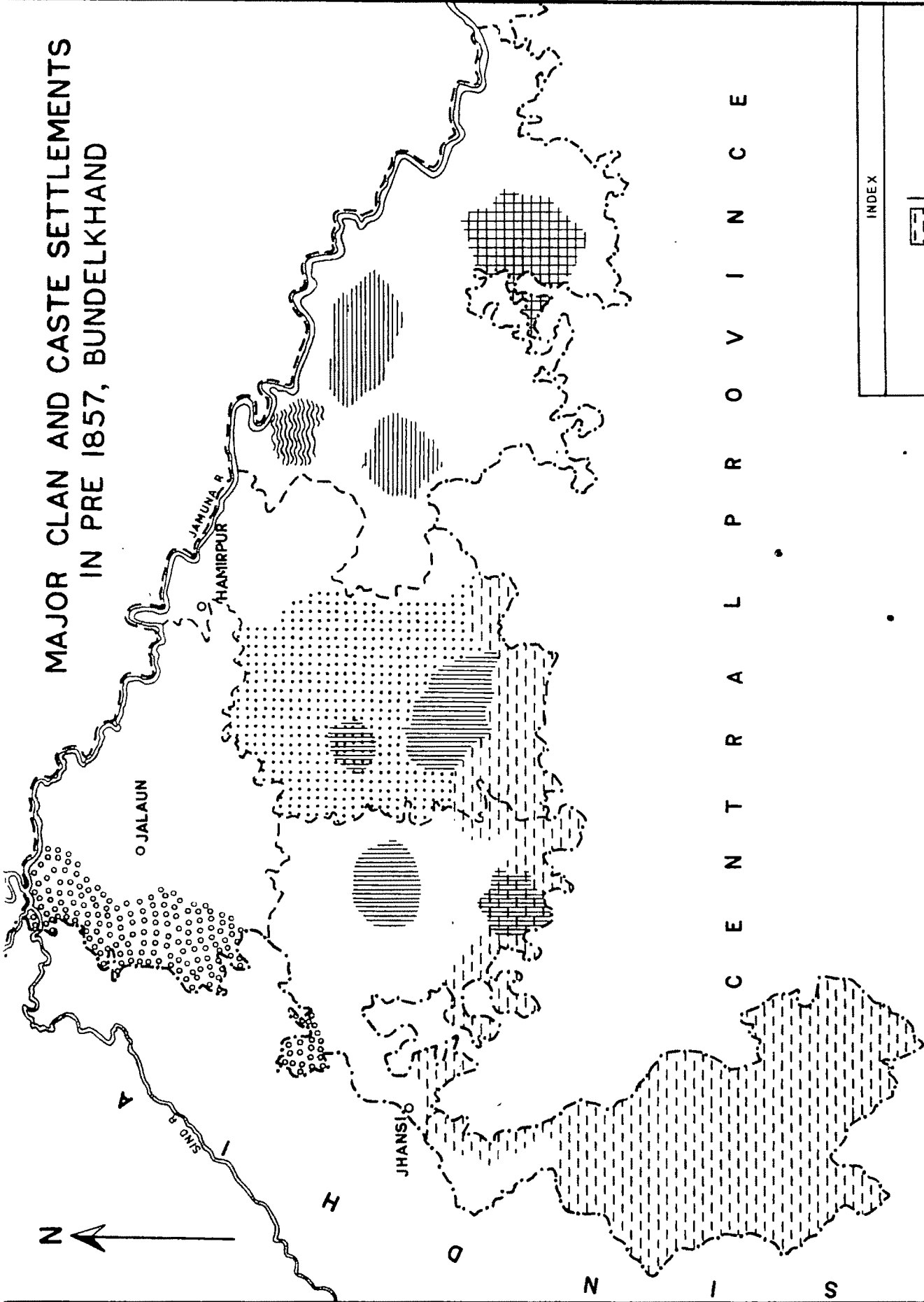
• History seldom records the antecedents of people with less pretensions and more modest social and economic disposition. Lodhis and Gujars for instance were migrants, the former from the west, the latter from across the Jamuna in the north. But at what historical conjunction they settled in Bundelkhand is uncertain. As for the rest of the caste groups like the Chamars, the Ahirs, the Kurmis, the Gadarias, the Kachis and the Arakhs, some may have been original inhabitants of Bundelkhand while others came in sometime in the remote past, before the struggle among the dominant castes overpowered them.

1.2 : The Structure.

Different waves of migration, varying patterns of clan settlements and different levels of power appropriation

16. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909) pp. 75-76.

MAJOR CLAN AND CASTE SETTLEMENTS IN PRE 1857, BUNDELKHAND



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Bundela	...	...	...
Kutchwahā	...	...	...
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lodhi	...	...	...
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C E N T R A L P R O V I N C E

N I S

gave the political fabric of Bundelkhand a kaliedoscopic, fragmented, molecular look. This was accentuated by the spatial distribution of the castes, the divisions in this case being more horizontal than vertical. With the exception of Chamars who formed the majority of population in all the districts and Brahmins who were fairly well-distributed all over Bundelkhand, each caste-group or sub-clan had a centre of concentrated settlement from where they proliferated and spread out but never in very significant numbers. If one could map out these various settlements and their geographical locations, one would get a variegated collage of dissimilar patches.

This heterogenous and varied conglomeration of people were held together by a normative structure of social and economic inter-relationships. Every group had a place in it, compatible with its status vis-a-vis those above them and those below them. What was characteristic of Bundelkhand was not so much the social and political division but the nature of stratification and the kind of rights and obligations each strata stood for. The irregular colonisation process undertaken by clusters of various Rajput clans not only made patches of settlements but left these communities with a significant degree of independence and immediate power. Their communal strength was something the regional potentates could never break. They were left as pockets of strength below the arching sovereignty of the kingdom.

The highest echelon of power and status was shared by the Bundelas and Marathas as regional potentates, the entire region being splintered into certain kingdom. There were the Rajas of

Jhansi, Jalaun and the Nawab of Banda, constituting the Maratha bloc. The kingdoms of Orcha, Banpur and Jaitpur on the other hand were the principal Bundela dominions.

Intervening at various points in the political arrangement were smaller jagirs, big estates and ubari tenures. The jagirdars of Jhansi and Lalitpur were all without exception Bundela descendants of the major ruling families of Orcha and Chanderi. Some of these estates remained in control of one principal chief and his family, while others broke up as different members of one family were apportioned parts of the estate, held together by clan linkages as coparcenary groups of land holders. Therefore, everybody ranging from the king down to the Bundela retainer were related closely or distantly by blood or through marriage alliances. It was here in the south of Bundelkhand - Jhansi and Lalitpur, sometimes spilling over into Southern Hamirpur - that Bundela stronghold was deeply entrenched. Some of the leading jagirdars were those of Katera, Kakarwai, Singwaha, Guna, Dongra Kalan, Jacklone and Pali, all situated on the south and south-west fringes of Lalitpur.¹⁷

Similar jagirs were scattered all over the other districts. In Jalaun, the major settlement was that of the Kuchwaha Rajputs inhabiting principally in the three parganas of Madhogarh, Indurki and Bhandere on the north-western borders of the district claiming descent from the Chiefs of Lahar, a small independent state in Gwalior, the three large Kuchwaha

17. D.G. Jhansi, Vol. XXIV (1909), pp. 109-110.

proprietors here were those of Khaksis, Rampura and Gopal-pura. The other major estate-holder was the Chief of Jagmanpur, the head of the Sengar Rajputs, who formed another large community of settlers of Jalaun. The Raja of Harda was of more modest disposition. A splinter of the family of the Raja of Orcha occupied the estate at Beoni, the only Bundela holding of note in Jalaun.¹⁸

The Bundela kings granted jagirs to their retainers, subordinates and important subjects not directly related to the principal family and sometimes not belonging to their own clan, a little away from their locale. Thus emerged in Hamirpur the estates of Sewara (in Kulpahar, south-west of the district), Saleya (a little north) and Sawasa. The Chief of Saleya was a Panwar, the jagir was earned by one Sobha Singh as a dowry for marrying a daughter of Chatrasal's family. The others were Bundelas.¹⁹

The only large jagir holding in Banda belonged to the Raos of Kirwa, in the south-east of the district. It was a gift from the Peshwa to the son of Raghunath, a certain Amrit Rao the first holder.²⁰

Though subordinate and dependant on the regional kings, these jagirdars and estate-holders exercised undefined power over their immediate region, their subservience being more nominal than real. They enjoyed virtually independent jurisdiction over their civil administration, quite independent

18. D.G. Jalaun, , Vol.XXV (1909), pp. 70-74.

19. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1090), pp. 85-86.

20. D.G. Banda, Vol. XXI (1909), p. 107.

of outside interference.²¹

The estates that these proprietors enjoyed were jagirs, nankar and ubari tenures. Marginally different from these was a particular kind of proprietary right, quite distinctive of Bundelkhand. This was called the Garhi-band tenure. The Garhi-band tenure-holders were always Rajputs, the so called thakurs in the official parlance. Belonging to any of the clans - Sengar, Dhundera, Bundela, Kuchwaha or Puar,, a garhi-band thakur held several villages and resided in a garhi or a small fort. This gave him the name 'garhi band'. He paid quit-rent or nazrana to the regional king, a feature characteristic of this right of title for otherwise, the holding would be nankar or jagir. The amount he paid varied but was invariably much less than a regular assessment. He appropriated the profits of any Abkari or Muskerat shops situated within his domain and had the right to levy tolls on all goods passing through his territory. In lieu of such financial privileges, these feudal lords had to perform military service when called upon by their immediate overlords. In all the villages held by the Garhi-bands, were found a separate class of people called Mahtos, akin to zamindars.²²

Pockets of garhi-band tenures were concentrated in Western Bundelkhand in the possession of the Kuchwaha and Sengar Rajputs in Jalaun and the Bundelas and Puaras in Jhansi.

21. From W.Muir, Secy. to Govt. of the N.W.P. To G.A.Bushby, Agent to the Gov. Gen. Bundelcund, 1st July 1853. C.O.J. Vol.20, File No.48 (U.P.R.A.A.)

22. From Lt. R.Doolan, Suptd. at Jalaun To W.Muir, Settlement Officer in Bundelkhand Orai, 21st Sept. 1842. C.O.J. Vol.11, File No.195 (U.P.R.A.A.).

Hamirpur had few such thakurs in the south, but Banda, inspite of the large Rajput settlement had none. Quite obviously thus, the garhi-band tenures evolved out of the process of emergence and growth of regional kingdoms.

These thakurs formed a very close brotherhood of proprietors, extremely conscious of their priveleges and sensitive to any outside intrustion. They were "... capable, from their numerous ties of Brotherhood and caste of raising a formidable, and often successful opposition to the Government, and making common cause whenever it attempted to coerce even the weakest individual of their body and in consequence a continual struggle was maintained ... between the Government and the Ghurreebunds".²³ A prevailing custom among them was to wage "Bhumiawat" which literally meant a war or fight for landed inheritance, the word derived from the terms 'bhum!' meaning land and 'bhumia' a landed proprietor.²⁴ When any member of the landed aristocracy, no matter how small, had a dispute with his ruler, he would collect followers and wage war on the latter's territories, plundering and burning his towns and villages, till he was called back on his own terms. "During this war it is a point of honour not to allow a single acre of land to be tilled upon the estate which he has deserted, or from which he has been driven, and he will murder any man who attempt to drive a plough in it, together with all his family, if he can".²⁵ In such ventures, the thakurs always enjoyed the sympathy and support of nearly all the members of his own class

23. Ibid.

24. W.H.Sleeman, Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official (Karachi, 1973), p. 245; Col.J.Davidson, Report on the Settlement of Lalitpur, N.W.P. (Allahabad, 1871), para 43.

25. W.H.Sleeman, Op.cit., p. 245.

and clan.²⁶ Such combined resistance was made all the more formidable by the fact that Rajputs in Western Bundelkhand in all grades from the prince to the peasants were often bound to those above and below them by the inextricable ties of common clan loyalties and by their attachment to land.²⁷ About half of the lands of most states were held on service tenure by vassals of the chief. The revenue derived from the other half was spent on maintaining armed retainers, drawn primarily from the same clan.

Below these intermediary power-holders stood the village communities, the world of the landlords and tenants. Land was held in zamindari, pattidari, imperfect pattidari tenures and something peculiar and particular of Bundelkhand, the bhia-chara tenure. Once again, the land holding pattern was related to the pattern of clan and caste settlement over particular areas. Communities that colonised regions held land there together, communally. Land was therefore a joint property and not the appropriated possession of any single holder.

Zamindari tenure was "a simple joint stock concern, of which manager is the lambardar (or lambardars) who, after paying all expenses inclusive of revenue declares in Committee, with the principal share-holders, a dividend, not at so much per cent, but as so much per share".²⁸ In a pattidari tenure, the cultivated land and waste were privately divided among the coparcenary proprietors and each patti or division thus made,

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 185.

28. P.J.White, Settlement Report of Kalpi (Allahabad, 1875), p. 34.

looked after independently. Compounding the features of the two was the imperfect pattidari tenure, where part of the land was held in severalty, the rest in partnership. Usually the cultivated area was divided and little besides the unproductive waste held together. The revenue was paid individually and the income from the common lands used to meet village expenses. Whatever surplus that remained was then shared among the landlords.²⁹

Bhaiachara, literally meaning custom (achara) of the brotherhood (bhai), was a form of proprietary right followed in villages held together by members of the same caste. The proprietors formed close communities and shared their revenue burden, corresponding to their fractional interest in the share.³⁰ Each co-sharer had the right to cultivate only as much as he could for which he paid the quota of the Government demand on his fields. His responsibility for the revenue varied with the extent of his cultivation. The amount each holder had to pay was not measured in terms of money but those of land, the unit of measurement called the bhaiachara bigha. In this system, instead of the rent rate varying with the soil, the area of the bigha increased as the value of the soil diminished so that instead of the rent-rate for the best soil being as elsewhere, two or three times as great as that of the worst, the bigha of the worst soil was two or three times as

29. Ibid.

30. B.H.Baden Powell, The Land-systems of British India. Vol.I (Reprinted Delhi, 1974), p. 162.

great as that of the best.³¹ A closer form of joint-responsibility and mutual combination was the bhejburar tenure, most common in Banda.³² Here the entire property was generally held in severalty and the revenue demand was then distributed separately. This distribution however was liable to re-adjustment and the village expenses and balances arising from the insolvency or embezzlement of one sharer made good by an additional rate on the holdings of the rest, in correspondence to the distribution of the jama.³³ In short, bhejburar represented a flexible form of readjustment of the Government revenue among the proprietors.³⁴ The owner of a parcel of land paid his quota of the revenue according to baach, a measure applicable to the whole estate. The baach was made upon a bigha of land, the rate peculiar to each village and liable to alteration.³⁵ Another form of bhejburar was called the Pouth. Its characteristics lay in the custom of a certain portion of the land usually the most coveted and fertile, changing its owner every year by rotation, "... the payments of the sharer included in that rotation increasing and decreasing yearly by the jama put upon the field or fields, as they came into or pass from their

31. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), pp. 81-82.

32. Report on the Settlement of the Banda District by W.W.Wright, Dy. Coll. & S.O. Banda, Nov. 1843. C.O.A. Rev. Basta No.204, Sl.No.13 (U.P.R.A.A.).

33. From J. Thornton, Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. To H.M.Elliot, Secy. to the Sadar Board of Rev., Agra, 12th April, 1845. Selections from the Records of the Govt. N.W.P. Mr. Thomason's Despatches, Vol.I (Calcutta, 1856) p. 74.

34. Report on the Bhej-Burar Tenures, in Zillah Banda by the Late H.Rose, Collector of Banda, Selections from Public Correspondence, N.W.P., Vol.II, Art No.XXXIV (Agra, 1852), pp. 72-85.

35. Report on the settlement of the Banda District by W.W.Wright, Dy. Coll. & S.O.Banda, Nov. 1842. C.O.A. Rev. Basta, No.204, Sl.No.13. (U.P.R.A.A.).

possession".³⁶

Socially, the proprietary class usually belonged to the higher caste groups. The bhalachara communities were predominantly Rajputs holding land essentially as cultivating proprietors. There were though few, Brahmin and Muslim brotherhoods as well.³⁷ In Jhansi, in a ghari-band thakur stronghold, the zaminders belonged to the agricultural castes, Kurmis Kachis, Ahirs and Brahmins.³⁸ Among them, the Brahmins held the largest number of villages being fairly numerous in most tahsils.³⁹ Predominating in western Jhansi but well distributed all over, Lodhis were in large numbers both as landlords and tenants. The Kurmis held a fair amount of land in property in Jhansi but the Ahirs and Kachis generally were of less modest means.⁴⁰

In Jalaun, varied Rajput clans constituted the proprietary class. Besides the Kuchwahas and the Sengars, there were a good many of Chauhans and a sprinkling of Puar, Bais, Pratihars and Gaur Rajputs in this district.⁴¹ There was quite a

36. Report on the Bhej-Burar Tenures in Zillah Banda. Selections from Public Correspondence, N.W.P., Vol.II, Art No.XXXIV (Agra, 1852), pp. 72-85.

37. P.J.White, S.R.Kalpi (1875), pp. 34-35.

38. From Lt.F.D.Gordon, Suptd. of Chanderi To Capt.W.C. Erskine, Commr. Sagar & Narmade Territories, Jabalpur, n.d. C.O.J. Vol.6, Dept. I. File No.83 (U.P.R.A.A.).

39. E.T.Atkinson, Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India, Vol.I (Allahabad, 1874), p. 266.

40. W.H.L. Meston, Report on the Second Settlement of the Jhansi Dist. (Allahabad, 1889-93), pp. 27-28 & 33.

41. D.G., Jalaun. Vol. XXV (1909), pp. 69-70.

concentration of Brahmins in Jalaun in the tahsils of Jalaun and Kunch.⁴² The Kurmis here, however, held the best if not most lands both as landlords and tenants.⁴³

A major Pratihara settlement, the only of its kind in Bundelkhand, resided in contiguous tract that sprawled over the western tahsils of Rath and Kulpahar in Hamirpur and the eastern tahsils of Mau and Garautha in Jhansi. The other Rajput clan most numerous in Hamirpur was that of the Bais. Migrating from Awadh in the north, Bais Rajputs colonised western portions of tahsil Hamirpur, Sumerpur, Maudaha, Mahoba and to a lesser extent, Rath and Kulpahar.⁴⁴ The most predominating non-Rajput caste in this district was that of the Lodhis. In fact, they were so numerously settled in one region that it was called the Lodhant or Lodhi country. This was roughly spread along the western borders of Hamirpur from the north to the south, covering portions of Jalalpur, Rath, Panwari, Jaitpur and a few villages in Mahoba.⁴⁵ Though chiefly a cultivating caste, Lodhis also owned land in proprietorship, their villages noted for their prosperity and tidy cultivation.⁴⁶ Brahmins of course constituted a major land-owning caste in Hamirpur as in the other districts.

42. Ibid, pp. 61-62.

43. A.H.Ternan, Report of the Jalaun District - Historical, Geographical and Statistical, 1869 (Allahabad, 1870), p. 15, para 9.

44. D.G., Hamirpur, Vol XXII (1909), pp. 70-73.

45. W.E.Neale, Report on the Settlement of the Hamirpur District (Allahabad, 1880), p. 20, para. 79.

46. D.G., Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), pp. 67-69.

In Banda, the Brahmins and Rajputs claimed most of the proprietary tenures. The most significant of the Rajput clans here were the Bais and the Dikshits. Together the Bais held a large cluster of villages in tahsils Banda, Baberu and Badausa. The Dikshits were settled over an extensive tract along the Jamuna in the north-west of Pailani and in a few villages to the south in Banda. They were however, best known as landlords of villages Jowharpur, Benda and Jaspura in Pailani. Among the other Rajput clans, Janwars, Mauhars, Bagris and Gaurs were some of the principal landowners in Banda.⁴⁷ The major Brahmin settlement in this district was around Karwi in the south-west; and it was here too that Kurmis held land in fair proportion as proprietors.⁴⁸

Bundelkhand was thus spotted with different caste and clan settlements with members subscribing to dissimilar social and economic strata. Next to the village zamindars, were rai-yats or the occupancy tenants. Land in Bundelkhand was plenty and available at easy rates and contrarily population was very scarce so that the land-man ratio was always in favour of the latter. In these circumstances, tenants were usually sought after, their rents seldom enhanced and their rights never challenged or threatened. On the other hand, "... in most cases, the acquisition of occupancy rights is favourably regarded by zaminders as forming a link which binds the tenant to the land".⁴⁹ They were allowed to shift their original

47. D.G. Banda, Vol.XXI (1909), pp. 92-96.

48. Ibid, p. 92.

49. D.G. Jalaun, Vol.XXV (1909), p. 75.

holdings and to claim some even outside them.⁵⁰ Besides, in a lot of instances, tenants belonged to the same caste as the proprietors and were men of 'substance'⁵¹ and since zaminders often cultivated land, both paid rent.⁵² The distinction between the two sections was thus not very marked.

The tenants themselves were divided into certain categories, related to their different rights and privileges. The first section held land at privileged rates, paying a low rent in one lump sum (called 'thansa' or 'thanka') on their holding. The maurusi tenants also paid rent on their holdings but at a higher rate that was fixed and not liable to enhancement. The other kind of maurusi tenants held land at fixed rate, paid rent by thanka but the amount was variable and could be enhanced. Finally, there were the ghair-maurusi tenants, enjoying few of the above privileges.⁵³ The line of demarcation between the cultivators recorded as 'maurusi kastkars' and men who were put down as village proprietors was very fine except that among the latter the 'mehtays' or headmen received a 'mehut' allowance. In Jhansi, almost all the maurusi tenants owned mahua trees, had portions of banjar (waste) land attached to their holding (for which they might or might not have been liable to pay rent on bringing them under cultivation) and sometimes also portions of grass reserves.⁵⁴

50. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), pp. 93-94.

51. D.G. Jalaun, Vol.XXV(1909), p. 76.

52. E.J.Jenkinson, Report on the Settlement of Jhansi (Allahabad), 1871.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

The other right over land recognised here was that of the non-occupancy tenants. Non-occupancy was generally synonymous to non-residence of the cultivators, they being given to cultivate relatively inferior quality of land at lower rates. Non-residents were as a rule looked upon as strangers and outsiders without any claims of much consideration.⁵⁵ Yet, even their rights were respected and seldom threatened. What was characteristic of this area was that although land was in abundance and tenants encouraged to acquire permanent rights of occupancy, pahikasht raiyats were fairly numerous all over.⁵⁶

Regarding agricultural labourers, occasional references to them seem to suggest that in Bundelkhand they were not very numerous. With so much surplus land available, people preferred to rent fields and cultivate for themselves, working for others to supplement their income.⁵⁷ Agricultural labour however, was traditionally provided by the socially and economically depressed Chamars and the Garariyas. They were not only forced to cultivate commonly the poorest lands, they were in addition put to all sorts of menial tasks. But for the yeoman's service that they performed, they paid rent at lower rates.⁵⁸

The principal cultivating castes were the Lodhis, Kurmis, Kachhis and, Ahirs, scattered in varying numbers in different

55. W.E.Neale, S.R. Hamirpur (1880), p. 72, para 352.

56. Extract from a letter from J.Wauchope to the Secy. to the Board of Commissioners in the Ceded & Conq. Provs., 12th Aug. 1819. Selections from the Revenue Records of the N.W.P. 1818-20 (Calcutta, 1866), p. 219.

57. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII(1909), pp. 93-94.

58. P.J. White, S.R. Kalpi (1874), pp. 34-35.

districts. Among these, the Lodhis and the Kurmis were the best cultivating and most affluent castes.⁵⁹ As earlier observed the major Lodhi colony was in Hamirpur and the Kurmi settlement in Jalaun. Socially, the distinction between the two was not very pronounced and in terms of their profession, both formed the hard working industrious agriculturists. About Kunch, the settlement officer in 1842 remarked "... to any one acquainted with their (kurmis) industry and skill in agriculture, this circumstance will not be placed last among the causes of the high cultivation of Koonch. They are thickly located in every direction and where they do not possess any proprietary right, they are to be found as cultivators".⁶⁰ Without exception, the best cultivated villages in all the districts belonged either to the Lodhis or to the Kurmis.

The Ahirs, Kachhis, Gujars and Gadariyas usually combined cultivation with cattle-raising or gardening. The Ahirs were the most numerous in Bundelkhand. Fairly well distributed in all the districts, the Ahirs always inhabited villages along the banks of rivers amidst ravines where jungles and shrubs enabled them to pursue their twin occupations of cultivation and stock-raising and grazing. They usually lived among the Bundelas, enjoining the latter's especial patronage. The Ahir women acted as foster mothers to Bundela children.⁶¹

59. Impey & Meston, S.R. Jhansi (1889-93), pp. 27-28 & 33.

60. W. Muir, Settlement Report of the parganas Kalpi, Kunch, Hamirpur and Jolalpur-Khurela, 1842 (Agra, 1846), p.36

61. Impey & Meston, S.R. Jhansi (1889-93), pp. 27-28.

Gujars, in all probability migrants from across the Jamuna were settled primarily in the western districts of Jhansi and Jalaun. Noted as 'turbulent' people,⁶² "addicted to crimes of violence and unruly",⁶³ the Gujars did not cultivate land very extensively, preferring to rear and tend sheep instead.⁶⁴

The other semi-agricultural caste group were the Kachhis, who apart from being cultivators undertook intensive husbandry and market gardening. The Kachhis in all the districts lived in the close neighbourhood of towns and markets where they could easily cart their produce for sale. It was in the area around Mau and Jhansi, in Banda, close to Banda, Sihonda and Kalinjar, in Hamirpur, near Mahoba and Kulpahar that the Kachhis lived in great numbers. In Hamirpur and Jalaun they belonged to the Kuchwaha sub-clan and claimed to be descendants of the former Kuchwaha Rajputs of Narwar and women of inferior castes.⁶⁵ In Jalaun, they were truly most predominant in the localities inhabited by the Kuchwaha Rajputs.⁶⁶

Lowest in the social strata were the Khangars, the traditional chowkidars and watchmen. They considered their positions as village watchmen their prescriptive and hereditary right, resisting the appointments of others to similar work.⁶⁷

62. A.H.Ternan, Report of the Jalaun District, Op.cit., 1869, p. 15. para 11.

63. D.G. Jhansi, Vol.XXIV (1909), pp. 90-91.

64. Ibid.

65. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), pp. 93-94.

66. D.G. Jalaun, Vol.XXV (1909), p. 64.

67. From Lt.F.D.Gordon, Dy. Suptd. at Jhansi To Capt. A.Skene. Suptd. at Jhansi, Camp. Sheragurh, 10th Feb. 1855. C.O.J. Vol.90 of 1855-56, Dept. XXIX (U.P.R.A.A.).

Standing together with the Khangars were the Arakhs. The two castes freely intermixed and intermarried and were often regarded as having originated from the same stock.⁶⁸

Muslims in Bundelkhand were in a decided minority being even fewer in the countryside. There were not more than a handful Muslim landlords and tenants. Only in Banda, did the Sheikh Muslims cultivate a fair amount of land in the western parganas.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, they were very insignificant and never reached Lalitpur in the south.

1.3 The pattern of economy

These varied sections of the rural population were dependant on an agriculture that was generally self-sufficient but never too prosperous, a phenomenon related to factors like sparse population, peculiar soils and fluctuating and unpropitious seasons. The soils in Bundelkhand being either too retentive or extremely porous for the most part, required well distributed and regular rain. But seasons during which conditions were favourable in both localities were extremely few.⁷⁰ The heavy black soils became unworkable and waterlogged when the rains were very heavy and the lighter varieties of 'parwa' and 'rakar' produced no crops when the rains were scanty. Good alluvial soils called 'kachhar' and 'tari' were restricted to the area adjoining the banks of rivers and even here were very unequally distributed. Irrigation if any, was negligible, agriculture being totally dependant on even and fair

68. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), pp, 74-75.

69. D.G. Banda, Vol.XXI (1909), p. 101.

70. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), pp. 11-13.

monsoon.⁷¹ But more often than not, Bundelkhand had to contend with capricious, untimely and often excessive rainfall that rendered cultivation in the black 'mar' soil impossible. The presence of extensive ravines added to the impediments for regular and prosperous cultivation.

Much of these adverse conditions could have been countered if lands were regularly and frequently taken up for cultivation. But Bundelkhand suffered from another major problem. Its population in relation to available land was very sparse. The "... cry" in Bundelkhand was "not for broad acres to till, but for strong arms to guide the plough".⁷² Vast tracts of waste lands lay with relatively few hamlets interspersed widely. The number of houses to a mile in Bundelkhand was less than even half of what was found in the Doab.⁷³

These factors together worked to make the division a perpetual victim of unpropitious seasons and agricultural fluctuations and disturbingly vulnerable to famines and natural calamities. Perhaps one of the worst evils that Bundelkhand had had to combat with, especially when land was left uncultivated for sometime, was the spread of a deep-rooted weed called 'kans' that threw large areas out of cultivation for a considerable length of time.⁷⁴

71. From Capt. W.C.Erskine. Suptd. of Jalaun To G.H.Bushby Agent to the Gov.Gen. in Bundelkhand, Orai 20th Sept. 1853. C.O.J.Jhansi Records, Vol.IV, File No.71 (U.P.R. A.A.).

72. Census of the N.W.P. of the Bengal Presidency taken on the 1st of Jan. 1853 (Calcutta, 1853) Pt.XXIV Dist. of Banda. From G.J.Christian, letter dated 18th March 1853. pp. 327-328.

73. D.G. Jalaun, Vol.XXV (1909), p. 58.

74. D.G. Banda, Vol. XXI (1909), p. 20.

Yet given all these impediments, Bundelkhand on the basis of a very flexible relation of production was able to sustain a self-sufficient economy. It did not have to import any large amount of grain for subsistence except rice that came from Patna and Pilibhit via Kanpur.⁷⁵ Otherwise, the grain that was produced here was usually sufficient and only in times of crisis, did this region have to look to Malwa and Kanpur for support.⁷⁶ The chief produce of Bundelkhand were wheat and gram in the rabi and cotton, juar, bajra and smaller millets in the kharif harvests.⁷⁷ The calender of agricultural operations was simple. When the first rain fell normally about the end of June, cotton was sown. In July, if rains continued juar was put in followed by till, bajra and other millets at the end of the month. By October most of kharif harvesting was done and rabi sowings prepared around the end of this month and the beginning of the next. The rabi harvest was reaped in April and till fresh sowings in June, lands were left lying.⁷⁸ Bundelkhand however, was most celebrated for its cotton which it exported on a substantial scale along with 'al' (dye made out of a kind of plant-root) and ghi.⁷⁹

75. P.J. White, S.R. Kalpi, 1874, p. 74.

76. Ibid.

77. A. Cadell, Settlement Report for the Banda District (Allahabad, 1881), pp. 49-50.

78. Impey & Meston, S.R. Jhansi, 1889-93, p. 49.

79. W.Muir, S.R. Kalpi, Kunch, Hamirpur and Jelalour - Khurela, 1842, p. 10.

Agriculture in Bundelkhand paid its annual revenue in three instalments or 'tehais,' as they were called. The proportions paid in each instalment were not divided equally. Usually, the season in which the principal crop was sowed and reaped in a region had to bear the major share of the revenue, the others having to make up the remainder. The first instalment was paid over the months of sawan (July-August) and kartik (October-November) the second began in Aghaun (November-December) and was carried over to Phagun (February-March). The third instalment was normally fixed after deducting the amount paid in the former two tehais, the balance having to be met by Bysack (April-May).⁸⁰

The management and collection of the revenue of a village was left to the village headman or mukhiya.⁸¹ This mukhiya usually was a representative of the founding family or caste and stood over the other pattidars and sharers.⁸² For the responsibility that he bore, a mukhiya received a percentage of the collection or some land to be held rent free. More commonly, the headmen were assigned to 5 p.c. of the jama. Very seldom were leases granted to the cultivators and revenue realised from them directly. The usual practice was that a revenue official was sent at the end of a year to collect the revenue and to make valuations for fresh harvests of the following year, the actual collection being left to

80. W.E.Neale, S.R. Hamirpur, 1880, p. 36.

81. Ibid., p. 36.

82. A.H.Ternan, Op.cit., p. 14, para. 7.

83
the mukhiyas.

Revenue assessment in Bundelkhand was fairly flexible, best suited to its unpredictable and precarious state of agriculture. A widely practised custom was the dekha-parki method of valuation. Dekha-parki literally meant valuing by the eye and it primarily determined the rent that the tenants had to pay to their respective overlords. The Jamabandi that was usually fixed was the most that the cultivators could pay in a normal, good season when crops did not fail and the harvest was reaped in full. In the event of unpropitious seasons however, it was an unstated law - and this constituted the dekha-parki practice - that an abatement of demand proportionate to the loss on the crops was allowed. There was no systematic appraisal of the crop, the estimate of damage or loss was settled amicably between the parties or at best by a local jury. No categorical step was required, the knowledge of what the harvest had been was enough to come to an arrangement for remission. Dekha-parki was therefore not a fixed practice of unfailing annual recurrence but one catering to the variable uncertain seasons, so typical of the region.

1.4 Towns and the townsmen.

Large towns were not characteristic of Bundelkhand. There were no major cities of the size of Lucknow or Kanpur

83. E.J.Jenkinson, S.R.Jhansi, 1871, p. 114; A Siddiqi, Agrarian Change in a Northern Indian State (Oxford, 1973), p. 62.

84. E.J.Jenkinson, S.R. Jhansi, 1871, pp. 114-115; P.J.White, S.R. Kalpi, 1874, p. 21.

nor even any big market-centre comparable to Mirzapur. Towns here were of moderate size and importance, serving primarily as intervening marts in the long-distance trade that travelled from the Southern and Central India to the north, across the Jamuna. The two largest trading centres in Bundelkhand were Kunch and Kalpi in the Jalaun district. Kunch was a principal mart in the traffic of goods from Mirzapur, Etawah, Kanpur, Shahjahanpur to the south and vice versa. Country made cloth from Jhansi also found its way up north via Kunch. The town itself and its immediate hinterland exported 'al' to Jhansi and cotton to Kalpi. The volume of trade that passed this town turned it into a thriving emporium of business that supported more than fifty banking houses and a commendable degree of wealth and luxury.⁸⁵

Situated on the Jamuna, Kalpi "... used to be the favourite seat of the Muslim viceroys and governors in this quarter of India, and in the case of such Oriental capitals, whatever the condition of the country around, they are always in the state of gaudy splendour".⁸⁶ But it was more as an entreport of commerce that Kalpi's prosperity survived the longest. The town was also the major centre of cotton trade. Another article of extensive traffic was ghi which produced locally was carried to Lucknow.⁸⁷

85. P.J.White, General Report on the Settlement of Pargana Kunch, Zillah Jalaun (Allahabad, 1874), p. 30.

86. P.J.White, S.R. Kalpi, 1874, p. 73.

87. Ibid.

Before commodities from Bundelkhand reached Kalpi for being transported to the Doab, they passed Rath, a major trading centre in Hamirpur, Mahoba, Maudha, Jalalpur were among the other towns of secondary importance in the district.⁸⁸

Banda was the only town of some importance in the district. It was directly and closely connected with Mirzapur in the east. Besides, two important lines of communication converged here - the Sagar road brought iron, cotton and grain from the south-west and the Kalinjar road along which wood, bamboos, dyes and other forest products passed north to Kanpur.⁸⁹

Jhansi was noted for its manufacture and export of a kind of cloth, locally known as 'kharooa' which enjoyed a wide market within as well as outside Bundelkhand. Dyed solely with 'al' into a red colour, 'kharooa' found its way to all parts of the North Western Provinces.⁹⁰ 'Chintz' and 'chunaries' were among the other kinds of cloth woven in and exported from Jhansi and most of the towns in the district were associated with the manufacture and trade of one or the other kind of cloth. The largest cloth-producing town was Mau, south-east of Jhansi followed by Ranipur, four miles further east. Erich and Bhandere were smaller centres though the produce from here was also sent to Gwalior, Jhansi and Kalpi.⁹¹

88. C.Allen, Settlement Report of parganas Sumerpur, Moudha, Rath, Panwari and Khurka, 1842 (Agra, 1846) p.10.

89. A. Cadell, S.R. Banda, 1881, pp. 47-48.

90. E.J. Jenkinson, S.R. Jhansi, 1871.

91. Ibid.

The town of Jhansi was however more important as an administrative centre and as the capital of the major Maratha principality in Bundelkhand. It attracted a large Brahmin settlement especially from Mahrastra. After Poona, Jhansi perhaps had the largest contingent of Marathi brahmins.⁹² The influx of wealthy Marathas from the Deccan and large bands of Gosains increased the importance of the town of Jhansi. It was crucial from the point of trade for its central position. Here five important routes met. First the high road from the west, including Agra and Gwalior; second that from Kanpur, Lucknow and the north; third, that from Nowgong and the South-east; fourth, from the south passing through the valley of the Narmada and fifth, from Sipri, Isagarh and Indore in the west.⁹³

In other towns like Kalpi and Banda, also centres of administration, Muslims accounted for a significant part of the population. A residual effect of Muslim invasion, the Muslims in Bundelkhand were primarily urban settlers. In these towns, they did small miscellaneous jobs. A sub-clan among them called Behnas were traditionally cotton-carders and lived in manufacturing towns of Mau-Ranipur, Rath and Kulpahar.⁹⁴

The weaving castes among the Hindus were the Koris and Kushtas who worked both cotton and silk cloth and congregated

92. A.L. Nagar, Ankhon Dekha Ghadar, Hindi trans. of V. Godse's Majha Prayas (Lucknow, 1957), p. 72.

93. Jhansi as a Commercial Town. From F.D. Gordon, Dy. Suptd. of Jhansi To the Suptd. at Jhansi, Camp Sagar, Jhansi, 27th Dec. 1854. Selections from the Records of Govt., N.W.P. Vol. III (Agra, 1855), pp. 424-425.

94. D.G. Jalaun, Vol. XXV (1909), pp. 75-76; D.G. Banda, Vol. XXI (1909), pp. 101-102.

in towns that supported their profession.⁹⁵

Trade was carried on through a wide nexus of activities that ranged from village beoparies to wholesale dealers. Mercantile transactions were fairly sophisticated. Speculations were widely practised with shroffs and baniyas playing crucial roles in the entire system.⁹⁶ Grain was carried by the banjaras.⁹⁷

Finally towns which were capitals of independant kingdoms and principalities also housed the entourage of the Indian princes - their officials, their army, and their large contingent of khitmadgars and servants.

The absence of a centralised political control over Bundelkhand together with a scramble for the usurption of regional power by different contenders left the political map of the region fractured. As small independent kingdoms and states mushroomed up, little pockets remained for local power-holders to fill in areas of political vacuum. The political matrix accomodated all, allowing different repositories of power to coexist at varied levels. Wherever in the hierarchy was a local magnate placed, he enjoyed immediate defacto control over his neighbourhood unhindered and unimpeded by any real interference from outside. In the economic sphere too,

95. Ibid., pp. 73-74 (Jalaun) p.97 (Banda) D.G. Jhansi, Vol. XXIV (1909), pp. 94-95.

96. Report on the Commerce and Customs of the Ceded Province from the Reporter General of Ext. Commerce, 20th Oct. 1803. B.T.C. Progs. 27th Aug. 1804, No.32 (W.B.S.A.).

97. Report from the Chunderee Dist. 1st June 1844, From Capt. M.D.Blake. Suptd. of Chanderi. C.O.J. Vol.86, File No.4 of 1844-45, Dept. XX. (U.P.R.A.A.).

local divergences ruled and characterised relations of production and patterns of landholding with a certain degree of flexibility and fluidity. The not too prosperous production system of Bundelkhand however threw up some amount of surplus to be able to sustain fairly buoyant trade, which catering to the needs of various power groups, centred on a handful of towns. But in the overall political and economic situation, stratifications were neither very rigid nor very clearly defined. The patterns that emerged never froze to exclude possibilities of reshuffling and changes. The only seals of solidarity were those of caste-linkages and clan-settlements. Divisions were primarily outlined and ossified by caste-ties and only secondarily defined in economic and political terms.

There were in-short spread all over Bundelkhand multiple grids of power arranged within a normative structure of relationships. These grids of power were not strictly defined, compartmentalised units. Instead, there was considerable degree of overlapping of political jurisdiction and caste-ties and clan-linkages. Such an irregular prescription of power equations left room for conflicts, clashes and readjustments. They were all appropriated and legitimised by the normative structure. "Bhumiaawat" was therefore not an illegal war for property but a much sanctioned and approved means of letting out the latent tensions in the relationships thereby refreshing and reaffirming them. Herein lay the basic ideological contradiction between the elements of the existing political equation in Bundelkhand and the English notions of political order. What existed here as

traditional behaviour and customary norms appeared to the English disagreeably arbitrary and unlawful. Their first impression of the situation in Bundelkhand therefore was one of chaos.

"The Boondelah Chief their dependants and subjects were ... viewed in the character in which they had historically appeared that of men prone to turbulence, and habitually and continually engaged in hostile contests - of men impatient of control, who acknowledged no law but that of force - who were even aiming at the aggrandisement of their own possessions by encroachment on those of others and who on every occasion of dispute were ready to appeal to arms." 98

It was when the English chose to rearrange the power structure in Bundelkhand by virtue of their acquired paramountcy that the ideological incompatibility turned into tangible points of friction and conflict between the people of Bundelkhand and their new foreign rulers.

98. Notes on Bundelkhand. Extract of Political letter from Bengal, 14th May 1812. Home Misc. Series, Nos. 11 & 12, pp. 459-511 (N.A., m.m)

Chapter - II.Experiences of British rule, 1803-1857.

The impact of British rule over any region especially when examined as a background to the revolt of 1857 is usually placed within the static framework (well worn-out in historical analysis) of stimuli and responses, of British policies and their effects evoking reactions from the people. In such discourse, there is a deterministic deduction of the casualty whereby certain specified, identifiable factors in British measures are arranged on one side of the equation and their perceived effects on the ruled on the others, the two together making a patent, sterile formula of the character of East India Company's rule and more so as being accountable for the context in which the rebellion of 1857-58 broke out.

An assessment of the gradual unfurling of the mantle of British intervention and control over Bundelkhand in the first five decades of the 19th century, however, defy any straight-laced enumeration of features of the new rule, taken as static and frozen. What is striking about the East India Company's political governance in Bundelkhand between 1803 and 1857 is that it lacked a linear pattern underlined by a well-conceived ideology or directed towards a predictable, futuristic end. Yet, the initial dent that the Company made in the political fabric of Bundelkhand in 1803, progressively developed till by 1853 the entire region had turned into a British defined and administered division. Given the benefits of hindsight, one is tempted to detect a degree of inevitability in the eventual British occupation of Bundelkhand. But the Company's policies

upto the 1830s certainly did not give away indications of containing any long-term purpose. Instead they were ruled by expediency namely maximisation of profits from commerce and revenue from production. It was, from after 1833 when the Company's commercial enterprises ceased and the arbitrary and mercenary extraction of revenue no longer paid off, that direct political administration with positive principles of governance was left as the only rationale for English existence in Bundelkhand.

There is, therefore, a clear and marked divide in the five decades of British rule in Bundelkhand that need to be examined under two distinct phases. Chronologically 1830, could be taken as the point of departure though that particular year holds little significance except in so far as it begins the second half of the decade that presaged a change in British political policies and foresight. This change was not only called for by the altered political fortunes of the East India Company but perhaps more decisively by local exigencies. The effects of the first three decades of British rule showed early signs of strain well within this thirty year period and as the situation deteriorated, some urgent palliative was required if the English wished to stay on in Bundelkhand and forestall its economy from going into total shambles. Therefore, local conditions and the increasingly audible murmurs of people's resistance to British policies, crucially intervened in the phase of transition, after which the Company had to attend to Bundelkhand and its people much more than it ever did before. In short, three sets of criteria should be examined

to inquire into the nature of British rule in Bundelkhand in these fifty years and their effects on different sets of people - the pattern that unfolded the evolution of the Government's policies over this region, within which can be traced the experiences of the people of their exposure to the new political governance and to the caprices of the new economic situation, the effect in terms of a threatened economic, societal and political dislocation; and the reactions of the people in being absorbed in a nexus that they could no longer comprehend. These three factors need to be studied within the broad time-frame outlined earlier. In all these spheres, the second half i.e. from 1835 to 1857 witnessed an acceleration in the pace of events and actions.

2.1 The first phase, 1803-20,

East India Company's political presence in Bundelkhand dated from 1803; as it progressively consolidated its political predominance over this region, its decisive economic infiltration appropriated revenue and as a trading concern, its commercial networks reached out into new areas and made fresh inroads. Propped up by political support, the Company's trading ventures now held brighter prospects of success. Political control over Bundelkhand was thus accompanied by the British stewardship of its economy that was not only realised through the means of revenue extraction but more important by introducing a new pace and direction to this region's commercial interactions. In short, there were three crucial points where the British intervened decisively to make their

entry into the existing fabric of Bundelkhand. The first was their acquisition of political power, the second their initiative and enterprise in the local commerce and third their devise for collecting revenue. In this first phase, the variables will be examined separately in a sequential order, partly chronological. But the three were in no way segregated, water-right units of operation. Both in terms of measures and their effects, there was much overlapping so that by the time of the second phase beginning from 1835, they were all enmeshed into a complex whole, which together proved a traumatic experience for Bundelkhand and its people.

2.1.1 Process of Political Penetration.

The East India Company acquired Bundelkhand in fragments. The division was included in the terms that the Peshwa surrendered for defraying charges for the Poona subsidiary force, following his defeat in the Anglo-Maratha wars.¹ In an agreement supplementary to the treaty of Bassein in 1803, the Peshwa ceded to the Company in perpetuity, all territories in the province of Bundelkhand east of river Dhasan, yielding an estimated revenue of Rs.36,16,000.² Initial resistance to British occupation of this region was offered by Shamsheer Bahadur, the Nawab of Banda in collusion with Jaswant Rao Holkar, Nana Govind Rao of Jalaun and the Raja of Berar. The British defeated the entire confederacy in 1804 and subsequently by

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1. Memorandum on the Political State of India, 19th Feb. 1813. Home Misc. Series, No.416, p. 617 (N.A.I.).
 2. D.L.Drake Brochman (ed), District Gazetteer of the United Provinces, Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), pp.95-96; Banda, Vol.XXI (1909), pp. 177-179.

separate settlements acquired most of what later constituted the districts of Banda and Hamirpur. Shamsheer Bahadur surrendered all his possessions in lieu of an allowance of Rs.4,00,000 assigned for his support in perpetuity. This was later supplemented with a considerable area around the old town of Banda for accomodating the Nawab and his troops.³ In 1804, Anupgir Himmat Bahadur Gosain died and his jagir consisting of parganas Panwari, Rath, Maudha and Sumerpur in the Hamirpur district lapsed to the British Government.⁴ Nana Govind Rao was given back his entire kingdom except the town and fort of Kalpi that the English retained; and Holkar lost his claim over Kunch.⁵

Several small states and principalities lay within the Peshwa's dominions, practically independent, the latter's authority over them being little more than nominal. The British signed treaties with them and granted sanads, confirming their rights on condition of 'fidelity and allegiance' to the Government.⁶ With Marquis of Hastings taking over as Governor-General in 1812, the British policy towards these

3. Ibid.

4. D.G.Hamirpur, Vol.XXII(1909), pp. 95-96 & 153.

5. D.G.Jalaun, Vol.XXV(1909), p.131. The British promised on condition of the good conduct of Holkar, to give Kunch in jagir to his daughter Bhima Bai at the expiration of two years. According to the provisions of the treaty, the administration of Kunch was retained in the hands of the Collector of Bundelkhand, its revenue being paid to Holkar on behalf of his daughter.

6. C.U. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Vol.V (Calcutta 1892), p. 15.

scattered states with indistinctly defined and overlapping jurisdictions was altered towards asserting more effective British supremacy over them.⁷ The terms of negotiations reached with these principalities of Bundelkhand were thereby changed and the latter's subordination to and dependence on the British, categorically spelt out. Regulation XXII of 1812 explained the status of these states and jagirs. They were exempted from the operations of general administrative regulations and from the domain of British civil and criminal courts. But the British reserved for its Government, the overriding right of political supremacy which effectively meant the authority to interfere for purposes of settling disputed claims, internal disputes and differences. They did not have to pay tribute for their entire estate though some did for certain villages or districts.⁸ Some of the large principalities that were granted such sanads included those of Ajaigarh, Bijawar, Chirkhari, Chattarpur together with a host of small jagirs such as Baoni, Jaitpur, Surela, Chirgaon, Kalinjar, Alipura, Behri Gaurihar, Gurowli, Jigni, Logassi among others scattered all over Bundelkhand.⁹

The Chiefs in Western Bundelkhand were regarded independent by the British and separate treaties of friendship and alliance

7. K.M.Panikkar, The Evolution of British Policy towards Indian States, 1774-1858 (Calcutta, 1929), pp. 47-49.

8. C.U. Aitchinson, op.cit., p. 15.

9. Andrew D'Cruz, On the Political Relations existing between the British Government and Native States and Chiefs subject to the Government of the North-Western Provinces as they stood in 1840, (Calcutta, 1844), pp. 17-23, 39-42, 53-58.

were signed with them.¹⁰ These rulers though left independent within their respective territories, were in time, forced to relinquish all political correspondence with one another and with other states. They were also bound to render military service whenever called upon to do so and had to acknowledge the supremacy of the British Government whose formal cognizance alone guaranteed them their dominions.¹¹ Defensive alliance recognising their status were signed by the British with the Chiefs of Jalaun in 1806 and 1817, Jhansi in 1804 and 1817, Orcha or Tehri in 1812, along with the Chiefs of Datia, Panna, Sampthar on the peripheries of the Bundelkhand division.¹²

British administration here was formed into a single district with headquarters at Banda. In the first year, it was administered by a certain Capt. John Baillie who acted under the directions of an agent to the Governor-General. Later in 1804, Bundelkhand was transferred to a Board of Commissioners comprising of a president and two other members. On fiscal matters, they were subordinated to the Board of Revenue at Calcutta. In May 1805, the administration of the province was handed over to the Board of Commissioners at Farrukhabad and Bundelkhand constituted into a regular district with J.D. Erskine as its first Collector. Meanwhile, constant additions

10. C.U. Aitchinson, op.cit., pp. 4-5.

11. Andrew D'Cruz, op.cit., p. 15.

12. Ibid, pp. 23-24, 27 & 34-37.

to British jurisdiction in this region, compelled its division into two separate districts in 1819. The area lying roughly to the west of Ken was called northern Bundelkhand with initially Kalpi and later Hamirpur as the capital. East of that river, comprised the second district or southern Bundelkhand to be governed from Banda.¹³

Hamirpur and Banda were brought within the range of Regulation IX of 1804 to be henceforth referred to as the Regulation or Kankuni districts. The two districts with a Collector and Magistrate each, were further divided into smaller units of administration entrusted to a Tahsildar. Each Tahsildar was required to maintain a police force in the region under his charge, out of a percentage of his revenue collections and every Tahsildar and zamindar was directly responsible to the Magistrate for apprehending offenders. This arrangement proving inadequate, fresh measures were adopted under Regulation XIV of 1807, whereby a regular police force was provided for. The entire district was divided into separate police jurisdictions under a single thana to be looked after by a Daroga or Thanadar with an establishment of Jamadars, barkandazes and chowkidars, proportionate to the extent and population of each jurisdiction. A cluster of such thanas were to be superintended by special officers appointed by the Government and subjected to the control of district and city Magistrates.¹⁴ To strengthen the police force, 15 Irregular cavalry were allotted for its use. This was reinforced

13. D.G. Hamirpur, Vol. XXII (1909), pp. 95-96;
D.G. Banda, Vol. XXI (1909), pp. 123-124.

14. D.G. Banda, Vol. XXI (1909), pp. 141-142.

later by 10 more, bringing the total upto 25.¹⁵ In these early years, the East India Company did little beyond putting up a working, skeletal structure of administration. They maintained discreet aloofness from the Rajput gharibands and influential brotherhood holding landed estates, disclaiming any design of reducing them to subjection. The hereditary tenures of such men and their right to exercise an independent authority within the limits of their domain, free from British interference and exaction of service tribute or revenue, were legally acknowledged. The Bundela gharibands were regarded as being under the protection of British power and political assertion.¹⁶ An early measure taken by the English was to demolish or garrison with their own troops, small mud or brick forts held by men of more modest disposition that lay dispersed in large numbers all over the two districts of Bundelkhand. In fact, almost all landholders worth the name, kept forts small or big, for their own protection. On assuming control over this region in 1804, John Baillie regarded it judicious to dispossess the zaminders and others of these small forts and to entrust them with Amins appointed for collecting revenue. The forts were thereafter, garrisoned by armed men employed by the Amin or together with them by irregular soldiers raised for the province.¹⁷ In several instances, such forts were not

15. From J. Wauchope, Judge & Magt. Zillah Bundelkhand To C. Rickets, Secy. to the Rt. Hon'ble the Gov. Gen. Futteygurh, 30th April, 1815. Home Misc. Series Manuscript 775-776, No. 321 (N.A.I.).

16. Notes on Bundelkhand. Extract of Political letter from Bengal, 14th May 1812. Home Misc. Series, Manuscript 511, Nos. 11 & 12, p. 458 (N.A.I.).

17. From W. Brodie, Magt. Zillah Bundelkhand To G. Dowdeswell, Secy. to Govt. Judl. Dept., 29th Jan. 1806, Judl. Criminal Progs. 20th Feb. 1806, No. 9 (W.B.S.A.).

taken over for want of men but simply demolished but it was ascertained that they should neither be rebuilt or repaired.¹⁸

However, some twenty-seven forts still remained in the two districts of Banda and Hamirpur in 1808, of which a few were garrisoned while others continued to be occupied by the original owners.¹⁹

2.1.2 Economic interest : cotton trade,

Provisions for maintaining law and order in the region were accompanied by those undertaken for extracting revenue. But in the early 19th century, one of East India Company's primary interest in Bundelkhand lay in the possibilities of trade in raw cotton that the region held out. The British found the cotton produced in Bundelkhand especially in Jalaun and the villages adjacent to Kalpi, to be excelling that of the Doab by the length of its staple and whiteness of its colour.²⁰ This region had a long established trade in cotton which in the late 18th century also catered to the needs of Bengal for manufacturing cloth for the English Company. References to the export of cotton from Jalaun and Kalpi to the east for the years 1796-97 and 1802 testify the demand for cotton grown in Bundelkhand.²¹

18. From J. Wauchope, Actg. Magt. Zillah Bundelkhand To G.Dowdeswell, 2nd Jan. 1808. Judl. Criminal Progs. 11th March 1808, No.21 (W.B.S.A.).

19. From J.Richardson, Magt. Zillah Bundelkhand To G.Dowdeswell, 6th May 1808. Judl. Criminal Progs. 3rd June 1808, No.49 (W.B.S.A.).

20. From R.Bathurst, Comm. Resident, Etawah & Calpee To J. Lumsden, President & Member of the Board of Trade, 25th Aug. 1808. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 9th Sept. 1808, No.20, pp. 124-127 (W.B.S.A.).

21. Reports & Documents connected with the Proceedings of the East India Company in regard to the culture & manufacture of cotton-wool, raw-silk and indigo in India. (London, 1836).

This demand received a major boost when around 1803, the East India Company discovering in China a potential buyer, sent its first shipment of raw cotton.²² The trade presaged ~~prospects/~~ of progressive increase and Bundelkhand as a major cotton-producing area was found suitable to meet the accelerated demand. In 1804, a Commercial Residency was set up in Kalpi, "... to provide an investment of cotton" in the surrounding region.²³ The Resident appointed, was to take into consideration, "the state of internal trade in cotton and the manner in which it had been carried on between the places where the article was grown and the internal markets at which the manufacturers were supplied with it".²⁴ It was initially instructed that the intended purchases of cotton were to be made at Mirzapur, which had grown to be a major centre of commerce in that article.²⁵ On later consideration, the Commercial Resident was permitted to buy cotton from the subordinate marts where it was brought for sale. But he was required to specify the parganas and districts from where he proposed to make his purchases and to confine them to those areas only.²⁶ The Resident was categorically prohibited from making advances to the farmers of cotton and entering into engagements with them for buying their crops.²⁷ Realising the

22. J. Forbes Royle, Observations on the Results of the Experimental Measures for improving the culture of cotton in India (London, 1847), p. 143.

23. From J. Lumsden To T. Brown, Chief Secy. to the Govt., 1st Oct. 1808. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 7th Oct. 1808, No. 21, pp. 30-33 (W.B.S.A.).

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. From T. Brown To J. Lumsden, 21st Oct. 1808. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 28th Oct. 1808, No. 2, pp. 431-432. (W.B.S.A.).

27. Ibid.

advantage of dealing directly with the primary producers, to the exclusion of intervening merchants as well as widening the area of purchases, the Commercial Resident repeatedly sought the government's approval for the measure.²⁸ He even gave the cultivators money in advance for one hundred maunds²⁹ in November 1808. But the Board of Trade did not formally sanction this practice.³⁰ Purchases were henceforth made at three marts - Jalaun, Kunch and Kalpi - following advances in money paid to the beoparies' (retailers) for the delivery of the required amount of cotton.³¹

Export of cotton proved to be a booming trade. Shipments to China increased while England's war with America brought fresh demands on Indian cotton from London.³² Purchases in Bundelkhand grew remarkably. From 32,000 factory maunds or 8,000 bales of cotton supplied annually by this region in 1808,³³ the amount increased to 72,000 maunds or 18,000 bales in 1818.³⁴ A major portion of this cotton was

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- 28. From R.Bathurst, To J.Lumsden, 5th Nov. 1808. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 25th Nov.1808, No.48, pp.520-524; From R.Bathurst To J.Lumsden, 2nd June 1809, Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 16th June 1809, pp.364-368 (W.B.S.A.).
 - 29. From R.Bathurst To J.Lumsden, 5th Nov.1808. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 25th Nov.1808, No.48, pp. 520-524 (W.B.S.A.).
 - 30. From R.Bathurst To J.Lumsden, 2nd June 1809, Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 16th June 1809, pp. 364-368 (W.B.S.A.).
 - 31. From J.Money, Comm. Resident, Etawah & Calpee To R. C.Plowden, Secy. to the Bd. of Trade, 28th Nov.1818. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 11th Dec. 1818, No.48, p.293; From G.Saunders, Comm. Resident, Etawah & Calpee To G.Udney, President & Member of the Bd. of Trade, 18th Nov.1829. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 22nd Jan. 1830, No.15, pp. 465-467 (W.B.S.A.).
 - 32. J. Forbes Royle, op.cit., p. 143.
 - 33. From R.Bathurst To J.Lumsden, 26th March 1809, Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 7th April 1809, pp.191-208. (W.B.S.A.).
 - 34. From J.Money To R.C.Plowden, 30th March 1819, Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs.23rd April 1819, No.16, pp.286-288 (W.B.S.A.).

intended for the Chinese market³⁵ and the Board wished to increase the volume of this trade to the Far East on all accounts.³⁶ In November 1819, the Resident was asked to provide for an additional 7,000 bales of good clean cotton to be consigned to London in 1820-21.³⁷ What the gomosthas of the Residency locally bought at the different aurungs (godowns), however, often worked out to much more than the specified demand of Calcutta. Between December 1808 and March 1809, for instance, the Resident through his agents had procured a total volume of 44,984 factory maunds of cotton, when he was asked to send only 32,000 factory maunds annually.³⁸

Increased demand for cotton here, pushed up its price phenomenally. Wild speculations at various points in the trading network, determined the market price of cotton, quite disproportionate to the cost of production of the article.³⁹ In 1808-09, cotton was sold at the three marts in

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- 35. Extract from a Comm. Gen. letter from the Hon'ble the Court of Directors, 15th July 1818. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 2nd Jan. 1819, No.94, p. 133 (W.B.S.A.)
 - 36. To Francis Marquis of Hastings, Gov.Gen. in Council, Fort William, 16th Dec. 1818. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 23rd April 1819, No.17, pp. 288-289 (W.B.S.A.)
 - 37. To J.Money, Resident Etawah & Calpee, 26th Nov.1819. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 26th Nov. 1819. No.17, pp. 439-440 (W.B.S.A.).
 - 38. From R.Bathurst To J.Lumsden, 26th March 1809, Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 7th April 1809, pp. 191-208 (W.B.S.A.). Apart from providing for the contingency of further increase in the future, cotton here was sent only after it was screwed and packed in bales. The purchase thus had to allow for same amount of rejection.
 - 39. J. Forbes Royle, op.cit., p. 143.

Jalaun, Kalpi and Kunch at an average price of approximately Rs. 9/- per maund.⁴⁰ Within ten years, the price shot up to an average of roughly Rs.19/- per maund⁴¹ in 1818, and a steady escalation continued much to the concern of the Resident. The market price of cotton in Calcutta fell in 1818⁴² but failed to arrest the price - hike in Bundelkhand, which was in the grips of a feverish purchase mania. The Resident sent urgent notes to Calcutta in February 1818 that good cotton was fast disappearing from the markets and additional funds would be required to complete the annual purchase of 32,000 maunds.⁴³ The market price of cotton sustained by a growing demand continued to rise throughout the first two decades of the 19th century.

Cotton purchased at the three marts were drawn from all over the divisions. British govern districts as well as independent states like Jhansi, Jalaun and Datia. In periods of heavy purchases, the cultivators received advances from the village beoparies (retailers) or dalals (brokers) and the sum required the latter borrowed from the whole-sale dealers.⁴⁴ The enhanced market rates of cotton rarely reached the ryot, being appropriated at various level

40. From R.Bathurst To J.Lumsden, 26th March 1809. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 7th April 1809, pp. 191-208 (W.B.S.A.).

41. From J.Money To R.C.Plowden, 10th Jan.1818. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 23rd Jan. 1818, No.61, pp. 396-397 (W.B.S.A.).

42. Boards reply to the Residents letter of 10th Jan. 1818. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 23rd Jan. 1818, No.61, pp. 396-397 (W.B.S.A.).

43. From J.Money To R.C.Plowden, 11th Feb. 1818. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 27th Feb. 1818, pp. 540-541 (W.B.S.A.).

44. From R.Bathurst To J.Lumsden, 5th Nov. 1808. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 25th Nov.1808, No.48 (W.B.S.A.).

by the intermediary dealers and merchants. But so long as the cultivator received something around eight rupees per maund, cotton was a preferential cultivation; and throughout the period of boom, cotton was the major kharif product.⁴⁵ On an average, the British districts produced roughly a little more than a lakh bales of cotton every year and the Jhansi and Jalaun states grew about the same quantity.⁴⁶

From an indigenous cotton mart, Kalpi became an important intermediary centre of trade in the English commercial network. This drew a community of bankers and merchants, dependence on whom was indispensable to the nascent colonial State.⁴⁷ An agent of two Bankers in Benaras was sent to establish a Kothi (agency) at Kalpi.⁴⁸ The presence and preponderance of these merchants in Bundelkhand proved to be decisive. For growing cotton, peasants and zamindars were often dependant on loans and advances that the banias and merchants provided.⁴⁹ From indirect involvement in agriculture, the influence of this commercial community spilled over into direct management of production. The British land-revenue policy worked much to provide them with the needed incentive to turn to agriculture.

45. J. Forbes Royle, op.cit., p. 143.

46. Ibid, pp. 140 & 143.

47. cf. C.A. Bayly, Rulers, Townmen and Bazaars. North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870 (Cambridge, 1983), p. 211.

48. Ibid, p. 212.

49. Ibid, p. 245.

2.1.3 Land Revenue Settlement.

Nothing demonstrates so plainly the English policy dictated as it was by expediency and immediate, short-term objectives, than the land-revenue measures undertaken in the early few decades of colonial rule. The principal feature of and purpose behind the first few revenue settlements appeared to have been to ensure progressive escalation of state demand on land, based on inaccurate and often arbitrary assessment of what the country could produce. Reviewing these early settlements, English revenue officials themselves later observed,

"To raise the Revenue, seems to have been the main object, and let the means be what they might, so long as an increase of Revenue was obtained it was received as an indication of prosperity and limits to the power and possibility of paying appear never to have been contemplated. The agricultural population seem to have been considered as in league to conceal their income and defraud the state. Year after year had the Revenue been raised and the more the zameendar paid, the more was it thought to pay." 50

As a matter of fact, little heed was paid to the complex pattern of customary tenures in Bundelkhand and the traditional methods of distributing the revenue burden among different rural sections. Yet the incidence of demand was clamped on the rural society with a degree of inflexibility and rigidity that was quite at variance with what this division had ever had to withstand.

British land-revenue settlement was introduced in Bundelkhand by its first Collector, J.D.Erskine in 1806-7 (fasli 1214).

50. Report on the settlement of Banda District by W.W.Wright, Nov.1843. C.O.A. Basta No.204, Sl.No.13. (U.P.R.A.A.).

Erskine's two settlements that spread over the years from 1806 to 1810 (fasli 1214 to fasli 1217)⁵¹ were fairly moderate in terms of the amount demanded.⁵² But in actual terms, the incident worked out to be much higher when the mode of payment was standardised. The change into a new currency immediately brought up the real demand by more than 20 p.c.⁵³ In the two triennial settlements that followed, Wachoupe by his "... overzealous determination ... to enhance the revenue of Bundelkhand and extort as much out of it was possible", raised the revenue demand substantially.⁵⁴ It was, however, Scot Waring and his assessments that were regarded as the 'unwitting scourge of Bundelkhand' for all time to come.⁵⁵ Deluded by the apparent prosperity of cotton cultivation, Waring raised the jama in 1815-1816 by 46 p.c. in the eastern parganas and by 21 p.c. in the west. In round figures, his revenue demand stood over all previous amount by approximately 3 lakhs of rupees.⁵⁶

Until a scientific recording of the productive potential of the land was instituted (and it was not done in Bundelkhand till as late as in the 1830s and 1840s), the Government jama

51. Ibid.

52. W.E.Neale, Report of the settlement of the Hamirpur District (Allahabad, 1880), para 149, p. 39.

53. A. Cadell, Settlement Report for Banda district (Allahabad, 1881), para 114, p. 93.

54. Ibid., p. 108.

55. W.E.Neale, S.R.Hamirpur, 1880, para 163, p. 41.

56. Ibid., para 165.

was assessed on the basis of a tentative knowledge of what the jama under the Mahrashas had been and a rough estimate of the present assets of the area.⁵⁷ The rates often bore no relation to the actual produce on the ground but once decided, settlements were made on their basis and an undeviating regularity of collection insisted upon. Disregarding local usages and long established practices, the English officially acknowledged only two persons on land, the malquzar or lambardar who engaged with them and the tahsildar who was entrusted with collecting the revenue dues.⁵⁸ Revenue engagements were made with those who came forward or who were able to meet the Government demand regularly for some length of time. In the event of default, the revenue rights were farmed out or sold.⁵⁹ From the revenue accounts of the years 1809 to 1812 the principle followed appeared to have been that settlements were made with one zamindar representing the brotherhood and where they refused, estates were farmed out.⁶⁰ A series of statements about engagements made with revenue farmers appear in these early years.⁶¹ The system of inviting farming offers could not have been begun in a more congenial period. As a corollary to an escalating demand for its cotton, Bundelkhand

57. Asiya Siddiqi, Agrarian Change in a Northern Indian State, Uttar Pradesh 1819-1833 (Oxford, 1973), p. 67.

58. From the Board of Commissioners in the Ceded and conquered Provinces, 11th Aug. 1818. Selections from the Revenue Records of the North Western Provinces, 1818-20 (Calcutta, 1866), p. 215.

59. Ibid., p. 214.

60. C.O.A. Mutiny Records, Basta No.3, Box No.25, Sl.No.18, File No.3. (U.P.R.A.A.).

61. C.O.A. Basta No.6, Box No.37, Sl.No.11, File No.1, 1811
C.O.A. Basta No.6, Box No.37, Sl.No.15, File No.4,
(U.P.R.A.A.).

witnessed an intense speculation on land in these first two decades of the 19th century. The Settlement Officers were invaded with persistent offers made by speculators to engage land for higher assessments and however severe the enhancement might be, rival offers were made for nearly every village.⁶²

The infiltration of men with capital into rural Bundelkhand was further facilitated by the new British regulation that engagements would be made with a zamindar only after the latter furnished good and sufficient security. For providing this security in ready cash, zamindars borrowed from the mahajans who were legally acknowledged as guarantors for the former in the official revenue statements.⁶³

In extreme instances when estates fell into heavy arrears, they were put up for sale, either privately by the zamindars themselves or publicly by the Government. Before Scot Waring took charge in five parganas of Banda, 123 estates had already changed hands.⁶⁴ An impressive volume of correspondence was devoted to give an account of all the lands proposed for public sale in liquidation of balances due to the Government.⁶⁵ By 1818, the amount of jama proved so

62. A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1818, pp. 116-117.

63. From Scot Waring, Coll. Bundelkhand To M.Moore, Actg. Secy. to the Bd. of Commr. 27th Aug. 1813. C.O.A. Basta No.9, Box No.44, Sl.No.22, File No.23 (U.P.R.A.A.).

64. A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1881, p. 135.

65. Statement of land proposed for public sale, 23rd Jan. 1813, Account sale of lands, 1st June 1813, for the years 1811-12 & 1812-13. C.O.A.Basta No.9, Box No.44, Sl.No.14, File No.23; Statement showing the no. of proprietors held up for arrears for Dec.1817, Jan. & Feb.1818, Account sale of Lands, 27th July, 1818.C.O.A. Basta No.18, Box.No.86, Sl.No.18, File No.38(U.P.R.A.A.).

staggering that lands put up for sale no longer attracted purchasers at the existing rate of assessment.⁶⁶ Throughout fasli 1224-1225 (C.1816-1818), purchasers were either not found for lands proposed for sale or some erstwhile purchasers were actually found deserting. No one was prepared to engage till such time as the jama was reduced.⁶⁷

The right that was bartered was one of managing the village revenue by engaging with the Government. It was distinct from the right over or possession of any share in the land of the village.⁶⁸ But so long as it involved an interaction with the State, it was a right that stood over proprietorship of land and in the wake of an escalating demand for the principal kharif production, was a lucrative source of income. The creditors, mahajans usually Marwaris, often became purchasers. The merchants too, trading extensively in country produce, invested their gains chiefly in land-mortgage and land-speculation.⁶⁹

66. Account sale of lands in the Dist. of Bundelkhand sold by Public Auction at the Cutchery of the Coll. at Banda on the 27th July 1818. C.O.A. Basta No.18, Box No.86, Sl.No.18, File No.38 (U.P.R.A.A.).

67. Ibid.

68. From the Board of Commissioners in the Ceded and Conq. Provs. To His Excellency the Most Noble Francis, Marquis of Hastings, Fort William, 11th Aug. 1818. Revenue Selections, 1818-1820, pp. 216-217.

69. From S.Waring, Collector To H. Newnham, Secy. to the Bd. of Commr., 14th April 1817. Revenue Selections, 1818-1820, pp. 234-238.

Those who actively participated in these land transactions and with interest, were different tahsildars, kanungoes of the parganas and officials connected with the Court.⁷⁰ Better acquainted with the nuances of English laws, they were able to avail themselves "... of the strong current which sets in favour of those persons who have engaged with Government. ..."⁷¹ The Tahsildar of Augasi in Banda, acquired in his own tahsil more than 150 sq. miles of land in the name of his son.⁷² Gaya Prashad Kanungo was found holding proprietary right and also the lease of Rampura village in the Simoni pargana in the same district. He was convicted only after he defaulted and declared himself to be bankrupt.⁷³ The book keeper of the Kalpi Commercial Residency I.J.Bruce, came to acquire considerable amount of land around Kalpi.⁷⁴ The rights over land therefore, became Commodities that were freely bought and sold and the government readily acquiesced in such sales so long as the enhanced

70. Extract from the Report of the Collector of Bundelkhand on the Revenue of that district, 20th June, 1816. Revenue Selections, 1818-1820, p. 226.

71. From S.Waring, Collector To H. Newnham, 14th April 1817. Revenue Selections, 1818-1820, p. 235.

72. A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1881, p. 136.

73. To W.W.Benson, Offg. Commr. of Rev. for the Allahabad div., n.c. C.O.A. Basta No.27, Box No.110, Sl.No.14, File No.37 (U.P.R.A.A.).

74. From the Actg. Coll. Calpee To H.Newnham, Secy. to the Bd. of Rev., 2nd Aug. 1819. C.O.A. Jhansi Records A. Div. File No.6. (U.P.R.A.A.).

revenues were paid regularly. The tenants and the zamindars were of little concern to the English officials. One major effect of Government jama fixed rigidly without reference to the nature of production was that the pahikasht cultivation increased. Since both rabi and kharif kists (instalments) had to be met at the time of collection, those with assets depending on one harvest, had to take up land in other villages to cultivate and met the other seasonal demand. This was particularly burdensome in Bundelkhand where in the absence of irrigation, lands yielded not more than one crop annually. ⁷⁵

2.1.4 Tensions

The only insurance to the rights of the zamindars and the peasants was their power to resist. Quite often they absconded as in an extreme instance, both zamindars and ryots deserted a 'mahal' with huge arrears.⁷⁶ In fasli 1217-1219 (C.1810-1812), it was reported about paragana Simoni in Banda, that "whenever zamindars refused to engage, estates were given out on farming but if the zamindars happened to be powerful and refractory no farmer would offer - it would consequently be held kham." ⁷⁷ The zamindars and peasants of

75. Extract from a letter from J. Wauchope, To the Secy. to the Bd. of Commr. in the Ceded & Cong. Prov., 12th Aug. 1809. Revenue Selections, 1818-1820, p. 219.

76. Settl. Account of the pargana of Koni, for the years 1217-1219 fasli. C.O.A. Basta No.6, Box No.37, Sl.No.11, File No.1, 1811 (U.P.R.A.A.).

77. Settl. Account of the pargana Simoni, for the years 1217-1219 fasli. C.O.A. Basta No.6, Box No.37, Sl.No.15, File No.4 (U.P.R.A.A.).

village Bushari in the Banda pargana, promised to pay the government dues, dissuading thereby Scot Waring from putting up their estate for sale. But, they did not pay anything. The Collector thereafter, sent barkandazes who were twice beaten off by the villagers and the grain they had collected carried away. Waring then decided to sell the estate.⁷⁸ Constant change of hands and the various rights that were created over land told heavily on the peasants. In a petition the cultivators of Unghar in paragana Chiboo in Banda, complained that they had to meet the farmers demands after they had already paid their rent to the zamindar.⁷⁹

More persistent opposition to British measures in these early years posed serious threats to the government often necessitating a call for arms. Three companies of Native Infantry and a six pounder gun had to be despatched to the assistance of the tahsildar of Hamirpur pargana for "repressing" what was described as["]the contumacious conduct of certain zamindars" in villages Puttara, Kossmira and Romeri.⁸⁰ While some zamindars of Puttara came forward to meet the English officer commanding the detachment, two principal men refused.⁸¹ On arriving at another village Sukrola,

78. From S.Waring To M.Moore, Actg. Secy. to the Bd. of Commr., 7th Aug. 1813. C.O.A. Basta No.9, Box No.44, Sl.No.22, File No.23 (U.P.R.A.A.).

79. From S.Waring To H. Newnham, 11th July 1816. C.O.A. Basta No.27, Box No.110, File No.37 (U.P.R.A.A.).

80. From Capt. B.Stewart, Commdg. Detachment in the Hamirpur Pargana, To J.Richardson, Judge & Magt. Bundelkhand, Puttara, 21st April 1808. Judl. Criminal Progs. 17th June 1808, No.6 (W.B.S.A.).

81. Ibid.

the English force found that the zamindars had absconded across the Jamuna carrying with them most of the grain and all the boats from the Hamirpur side of the river.⁸² In Peara, a village in the same pargana, the zamindars together with two or three hundred armed men and draught-bullocks went to the fields and reaped the standing grain. A chaprasi was sent to summon them to the tahsildar; the zamindars not only refused to go but threatened to kill the chaprasi, if the latter coerced them. A proclamation was thereafter, sent to the village. Its contents were to be read aloud by the beat of drums and a copy stuck on the houses of the zamindars. The latter came armed to oppose the officials and refused to let them put it up.⁸³ Similar resistance in parganas Rath and Panwari in Western Hamirpur caused a heavy balance of revenue to accrue till 1806-7.⁸⁴ In Banda, in village Murka, falling within the Augasi pargana, the Ahirs and other peasants with the compliance of one of the zamindars refused to let others cultivate the fields. Strongly armed, they resisted the chaprasis of the tahsildar sent to summon them; when the thanadar and chaprasis went to seize the offending peasants, the zamindars and other inhabitants of the village came to the former's defence, threatening to kill the officials if they came near. In other instance, the zamindars of Jaspura

82. From Capt. B. Stewart To J. Richardson, Sukrawla, 24th April 1808. Judl. Criminal Progs. 17th June 1808, No.6 (W.B.S.A.).

83. A list of Papers in the cause of Syed Gholam Ali Khan, Tahsildar of Hamirpur, Plaintiff and Durjun, Chutch & other defendants. Judl. Criminal Progs. 17th June 1808, No.10 (W.B.S.A.).

84. Progs. in the Faujdari Adalat of Zilla Bundelkhand on Tuesday, 26th Sept. 1809 before J. Richardson. Judl. Criminal Progs. 10th Nov. 1809, No.14 (W.B.S.A.).

and Johanpur refused to allow anyone to collect revenue.⁸⁵

The English also had an early brush with the Bundelas. The most celebrated of the Bundela rebels was Gopal Singh who between 1807 and 1810 continuously led incursions against towns and villages. Kunch was attacked and several thanas plundered to decisively obstruct British rule.⁸⁶ Several years later after most of his followers had been killed or captured, Gopal Singh sought pardon. He was acquitted granted a jagir and presented with a sword.⁸⁷ Such individual⁸⁸ resistance to British authority as also instances of Rajaram and Omrao Singh⁸⁹ in Hamirpur and Banda in 1805 and 1807 stood against any clamping down of the new rule and its hastily conceived laws.

2.2. Problems of Unbalanced Growth in the Decade of the 20s, 1820-35.

The opening of the 1820s saw the district of Bundelkhand split into two - Banda and Hamirpur. It was

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- 85. From J.Wauchope, Coll. To J.Richardson, Magt., Bundelkhand, Jalalpur, 7th March 1810. Judl. Criminal Progs. 21st April 1810, No.57 (W.B.S.A.).
 - 86. From J.Richardson To G.Dowdeswell, Secy. to Govt. in the Judl. Dept., 27th March 1810. Judl. Criminal Progs. 6th April 1810, No.9 (W.B.S.A.).
 - 87. From J.Richardson To N.B.Edmonstone. Secy. to Govt. of the Sec. & Pol. Dept., 12th Nov. 1807. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Nov. 1809, No.29; From the Actg. Agent to the Gov.Gen., 25th April 1825. For. Pol. Progs. 6th May 1826, No.26 (N.A.I.).
 - 88. From Magt. of the Zillah of Bundelkhand To J.Lumsden, Chief Secy. to the Govt. of Fort William, 6th Aug. 1805. Judl. Criminal Progs. 5th Sept. 1805, No.2 (W.B.S.A.).
 - 89. From J.Richardson To N.B.Edmonstone, 27th April, 1807. Judl. Criminal Progs. 4th June 1807, No.38. (W.B.S.A.).

this decade and the one following that in some senses augured events for the future. It was now that Bundelkhand's trip to increased cotton cultivation and feverish export of the commodity threatened to be short-lived and the economy after a temporary invigoration found itself being left with only the added premiums of a passing bonanza. Cotton the major commercial crop of this region, failed to have either a stable demand or to command a constant price. In 1819, the trade experienced a severe check when speculation in cotton collapsed miserably that year.⁹⁰ A persistent depression followed in the Chinese market for raw cotton. After 1824-25 the price of cotton decreased progressively till by 1831-32, Banda cotton was selling at only Rs.11.8 annas to Rs.12 per maund.⁹¹ The only saving grace seemed to have been that the Commercial Residency's annual purchase of cotton continued at a high rate till the 1830s. In fact, there seemed to have been an increase in actual terms because in 1830 the investment was reduced to 25,000 bales of cotton which was said to be 5,000 less than that of the year before.⁹² But, in December 1833, the English Resident at Kalpi was asked to wind up the concerns.⁹³ Following its loss of monopoly, the Company decided against sending any more cotton from India to China⁹⁴

90. J. Forbes Royce, op.cit., p. 140.

91. A. Siddiqi, op.cit., pp. 155-156.

92. From the Resident, Etawah & Calpee To G.Saunders, Actg. President Bd. of Revenue, Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 22nd Jan. 1830, No.191 (W.B.S.A.).

93. To R.Duncan, Asstt. in charge of the Calpee Factory n.d. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 30th Dec. 1833, No.370 (W.B.S.A.).

94. Our Govt. Gen. in Council at Fort William, 10th Dec. 1833, Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 30th Dec. 1833, No.19 (W.B.S.A.).

and the set-up which till January 1833, had bought 11,052 bales containing 44,208 factory maunds of cotton,⁹⁵ was closed in a month's notice. In January 1834, the factory reported that it had no cotton left.

Cotton boom in Bundelkhand had passed for all time to come. Although private merchants took over from the East India Company, the thriving trade was never revived. In fact immediately after the withdrawal of the Company's Commercial Residency in Kalpi, the investment of the private merchants also declined. At peak period of investment, East India Company's purchases had amounted to 40 lakhs of rupees a year and that of the private merchants to 18 lakhs of rupees. After 1833, when the former was discontinued the latter too dwindled to a paltry annual expenditure of 7 lakhs.⁹⁶

Unmindful of the fluctuations and increasing depression in the cotton market, revenue continued to be pitched at a high if not escalating rate of assessment. In Banda the settlement for the years 1228 to 1232 faslis (C.1820-21 to 1824-25), retained the former jama with minor reductions on estates that had begun to show signs of strain.⁹⁷ For

95. From C.W.Truscott, Actg. Resident at Etawah & Calpee To G.Saunders, Actg. President of Bd. of Rev., 24th June 1833. Bd. of Trade Comm. Progs. 8th July 1833, No.47, p. 192 (W.B.S.A.).

96. Reports & Documents connected with the Progs. of the E.I.C. in regard to the culture & manufacture of cotton-wool, raw-silk and indigo in India (London, 1836), p. 120.

97. Report on the Settl. of Banda by W.W.Wright, Dy. Coll. & Settl. Officer, Banda, Nov.1843. C.O.A. Basta No.24, Sl.No.13 (U.P.R.A.A.).

Hamirpur and Kalpi, Valpy made two settlements in 1821 and 1826, embracing as was said, Waring's views, '... with still greater enthusiasm'.⁹⁸ But now the rural economy of Bundelkhand could no longer bear the heavy incidence of Government demand. Arrears began to mount and lands were increasingly thrown out of cultivation but the Settlement Officers refused to consider any abatement in the jama. Default of revenue was attributed not to overassessment but embezzlement and misappropriation of resources by the proprietors.⁹⁹ The only remedy still was sale that, it was thought, would ensure better management and higher returns. In Banda, crop failure in 1821 led to a large balance of revenue for fasli 1229 (C.1821-22). Heavy rains destroyed almost the entire kharif harvest, including cotton. The rabi outturn was good but grains became three times cheaper than what they had been a year before. Purchasers were no longer willing to buy land and proprietors who had hitherto paid punctually, began to default.¹⁰⁰ In fact, by the end of this settlement period sale of land for arrears of revenue stopped from want of purchasers. But already half the area in the Banda district had passed into the hands of purchasers, "... whose nefarious practices were the subject of never ending complaint on the part of the officers who, on the

98. W.E.Neale, S.R.Hamirpur, 1880, para 186, p. 45.

99. From C. Tucker, Coll. Calpee To A. Ross & S. Waring, Board of Commissioners in the Ceded and Conq. Provinces, 6th July 1821. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.I, File No.7 (U.P.R.A.A.).

100. From J.E.Wilkinson, Coll. Banda, 5th Oct. 1822. Progs. of the Board of Revenue in the Western Provs. 1822-29, Vol.9, 14th Dec. 1822, No.6 (U.P.S.A.L.).

occurrence of balance were ready to add to the number of capitalist proprietors." ¹⁰¹

By the time of the 7th settlement for fasli 1233 to 1237 (C.1825-26 to 1829-30), the agricultural situation had turned fairly grave in both Hamirpur and Banda. In the spring of 1824, Banda was visited by an epidemic outbreak of cholera followed by extraordinarily heavy rains that destroyed much of the kharif.¹⁰² The same year, the plague of 'kans' grass was first heard in the district and its menace continued unabated since that time.¹⁰³ Very poor crops at both harvests in fasli 1237 (C.1829-30), completed the ruin of agriculture in Banda.¹⁰⁴ The state to which the district was brought, causing the transfer of an immense quantity of landed property, forced the attention of the Government to take steps so that the old proprietors could purchase back their hereditary malguzari rights. As an incentive, it was declared that whoever pleased could resign their malguzari engagements. On the 1092 estates in the whole of Banda, 588 were resigned and placed under kham management (directly governed by Government) and remained so till 1833. The revenue of these resigned estates amounted to more than two-thirds of that of the whole district. Of those that were not resigned, nearly half were situated in the parganas of Chibu, Tirohan and Budausa. "They were distant from the sudder station. The soils were not of the same fine quality and at the settlements of 1223 fasli (1815-1816) this tract of country was little known, so that

101. A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1881, p. 121.

102. Ibid., p. 125.

103. Ibid., p.123; Report on the settlement of Banda District by W.W.Wright, Banda, Nov. 1843, C.O.A., Basta No.24, Sl.No.13 (U.P.R.A.A.).

104. A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1881, p. 125.

competition for them was next to nothing. Hence the reason why the demand from them was not raised so much and why the owners did not have to resign."¹⁰⁵

Similar fate awaited Hamirpur. Zamindars of five villages in Kalpi, refused obstinately in 1824 to pay a rupee more than what they had paid the year before, and tenders for revenue farming were accepted for their lands.¹⁰⁶ But in three years, the farmers in pargana Kalpi were found resigning from their engagements unable to meet the public demand.¹⁰⁷ Several pattidars in the pargana were in such impoverished condition that the Collector laid little hopes of realising revenue.¹⁰⁸ In a statement concerning four villages, the Tahsildar of Panwari in Hamirpur ascribed the balance of revenue chiefly to high assessment, the poverty of the zamindars and consequently their incapacity to cultivate land from what of capital needed to exploit their existing resources. The lamdardar and peasants in one village Birhit actually absconded and those in possession were near destitutes by 1827.¹⁰⁹ The decade ended with the eastern

105. Report on the settlement of Banda Dist. by W.W.Wright, Nov.1843. C.O.A. Basta No.24, Sl.No.13 (U.P.R.A.A.).

106. From R.N.Cathcart, Actg. Coll. of Hamirpur To R.M.Tilghnan, Secy. to the Bd. of Rev. of C.P., Patna, 29th May, 1824. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.I, File No.9 (U.P.R.A.A.).

107. Petitions of Appa, Farmer of mauza Mirgaon, Parg. Calpee & of Shyamsunder, his security, 1827. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.I, File No.10 (U.P.R.A.A.).

108. From Offg. Coll. Banda, 5th July 1827 To R.M.Tilghman, 5th July 1827, C.O.A. Basta No.54, Box No.174, File No.19 (U.P.R.A.A.).

109. Trans. of the Tahsildar of Panwari's statements concerning four villages belonging to that Pargana. C.O.A. Basta No.54, Box No.174, Sl.No.19, 1825 (U.P.R.A.A.).

parganas of Hamirpur suffering a calamitous agricultural season in fasli 1237 (C.1829-30).¹¹⁰ A deep-rooted economic decadence had set in, in the two districts. Balances accrued every year from 1825-26 onwards even though every means were resorted to for the collection of revenue.¹¹¹ What caused greater concern to the English was that money-lenders withdrew from either speculating in land or standing as gaurantors for the zamindars in Bundelkhand.¹¹²

By 1820s, it was fairly clear that British revenue settlements had proved to be a complete failure. But the decisive factor that caused such acute agrarian crisis in Bundelkhand was the sudden depression in its cotton trade. The early prosperity of the division that the production and export of cotton accounted for, appeared deceptive enough to raise the government revenue. With the decline of demand for Bundelkhand's cotton and recession in its price, the source of the region's temporary prosperity ended, while the incidence of revenue remained high to throttle the local economy. The English officials themselves later in restrospective, observed the crucial role of cotton in the eventual decadence of Bundelkhand's agricultural production. W.S.Wright, settling revenue in Banda in 1843 observed, "In the hope that new lands reclaimed would yield a higher produce, assessments were increased in 1223 fasli (1815-16) and the demand for cotton may have led to its more extended cultivation where

110. C.Allen, Settlement Report of Parganas Sumerpur, Maudha, Rath, Panwari & Khurka, 1842 (Agra, 1846), p. 16.

111. Ibid.

112. From M.Ainslie, Commr. of Bundelkhand To Bd. of Rev., 2nd Feb. 1830. Progs. Sadar Bd. of Rev. on Deputation, Jan & Feb. 1831, Vol.3, 11th Feb.1831, No.20 (U.P.S.A.L.).

waste lands were available and that this gave to agricultural pursuits an appearance of prosperity which was temporary, ..."¹¹³ Talking of the decreased Government purchase of cotton in Kunch and Kalpi, the Settlement Officer W.Muir in 1842 remarked, "Here we may trace one source from which the over-whelming assessment of so long a period was drawn as well as a cause of the accumulated ruin which has latterly crushed the district"¹¹⁴.

2.2.1 Agrarian conditions, 1830-35

The first land-settlements of the 1830s for both Banda and Hamirpur were marked by large scale remissions being granted on the revenue due to the Government, for the first time in Bundelkhand. The local officials realised how deep the ruin had penetrated and that the immediate need was an abatement of revenue. Reductions of revenue in the settlement reports were therefore, accompanied by statements of the officer concerned, justifying them. Widespread agricultural distress appeared as indubitable proofs of the injudicious revenue measures hitherto undertaken. In Banda, Begbie proposed a drastic reduction of revenue whereby the Government eventually relinquished half of the old jama.¹¹⁵ The difference between the total revenue of Waring's settlement in fasli 1223 (C.1815-16) and that of Begbie's in fasli 1241

113. Settlement Report of the Banda district by W.S. Wright, Dy. Coll. Banda, Nov., 1843 Sadar Bd. of Rev., N.W.P. 2nd to 9th June 1848, Vol.358, No.2 (U.P.S.A.L.).

114. W. Muir, Settlement Report of Calpee Parganas, 1842 (Agra, 1846), p. 10.

115. A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1881, p. 30.

(C.1833-34), worked out to be Rs.5,23,000.¹¹⁶ Although marginal improvements were seen in cultivators willing to resume engagements in the resigned estates that had been brought under kham management, the unvarying impoverishment remained still to be corrected.¹¹⁷

In Hamirpur, Cathcart undertook the settlement of resigned lands which amounted for more than half the entire district for faslis 1238 to 1242 (C.1830-31 to 1834-35). A large amount of relief was granted by Ainslie, the Commissioner¹¹⁸ in 1830 with a long note to the Board of Revenue justifying his measure.¹¹⁹ The relief granted though large was neither judiciously distributed nor apparently decided on any regular system. Some villages were allowed considerable reductions while in others perhaps nearly as heavily assessed, nothing was given.¹²⁰

The changed attitude of the officials was also reflected in the greater interest that they took in the working of the village land holding pattern and in trying to retain it, undisturbed. On the subject of claims of malikana in Bundelkhand, it was now stipulated that the excluded proprietors were to be regarded to have a right to malikana

116. Report on the settlement of Banda Dist. by W.W. Wright, Dy. Coll. & Settl. Officer, Banda, Nov. 1843. C.O.A. Basta No.24, Sl.No.13 (U.P.R.A.A.).

117. Ibid, A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1881, p. 30.

118. C.Allen, S.R.Sumerpur, Rath, Panwari & Khurka, 1842, p. 16.

119. From M. Ainslie, Commr. of Bundelkhand To Board of Rev. 2nd Feb. 1830. Progs. Sadar Bd. of Rev. on Deputation, Jan. & Feb. 1831, Vol.3, 11th Feb. 1831, No.20 (U.P.S.A.L.).

120. C. Allen, S.R.Sumerpur etc, 1842, p. 16.

(proprietary) by way of compensation, in lieu of their lost right to engage. The rate of malikana was to be computed according to the capabilities of the estate but the minimum would in any case be 5 p.c. of the net collection.¹²¹ The different sharers on a bhaiachara estate were also to be left to themselves to modify their existing burars (shares of revenue) to their mutual advantage. Government interference would be none and resorted to only in exceptional circumstances. The Collector under no condition was to change the adjustment of the bigha (measure of land) within the period of five years of settlement, the privilege of doing so in contingency, was left to the proprietors alone.¹²²

Steps were also taken to safeguard the rights of the zamindars and cultivators and thereby induce them to ensure regular cultivation. In a village in Kalpi, the sale of land was actually turned down in favour of it being farmed out, from fear that the former might reduce the pattidars to mere tenants of the auction-purchaser.¹²³ In another mauza in the Panwari pargana of Hamirpur, although land was farmed out, the old zamindars were allowed to cultivate as much land as they required at half the rate usually demanded from resident ryots.¹²⁴ In January 1831, A.W. Begbie the Collector of Banda

121. From J. Thomason, Offg. Secy to the Govt. to Sudder Board of Rev. On Deputation, 8th Jan. 1833. Progs. of Sadar Bd. of Rev. N.W.P. Jan. 1833, No. 3 (U.P.S.A.L.).

122. From Secy. to Govt. Dept. To Sudd. Board of Rev. on Deputation, 25th June 1833. To Secy. to Govt. Rev. Dept. From J.G. Deedes, Offg. Secy Board of Rev. Progs. of Sadar Bd. of Rev. N.W.P., Aug. 1833. Vol. 21, No. 23 & 24 (U.P.S.A.L.).

123. From Actg. Coll. of Calpee To R.M. Tilghman, Offg. Commr. of Rev. 7th Divn., 6th Feb. 1833. C.O.J. Vol. 53, File No. 9 (U.P.R.A.A.).

124. From J.G. Reeds, Offg. Secy. S.B.R. To the Secy. of Govt. Rev. Dept. n.d. Progs. Sadar Bd. of Rev. N.W.P. May 1833, Vol. 18, No. 32 (U.P.S.A.L.).

observed how public sale for balances in revenue caused indiscriminate sacrifice of pattidari rights. "The pattidars had no voice in fixing of the village jama for which they were to be held jointly responsible and those who regularly discharged their quotas were by the act of sale involved in the same fate with the defaulters." Begbie therefore, proposed that separate pattas should be given to each pattidar who, thereby, would not be responsible for the jama of the entire village and so long as he paid his quota of revenue his tenure would be insured.¹²⁵ In 1833, apprehending a fall in cultivation due to want of rain and high price of grains, tuccavi loans were granted in parganas Kunch, Sumerpur, Panwari and Maudha in Hamirpur.¹²⁶

The much needed relief failed to arrest the growing ruin of agricultural production. In three separate statements forwarded to the Commissioner on the 20th, 21st and 26th of April 1830, the Deputy Commissioner of Banda reported on the villages where arrears had mounted and were proposed for sale. There were in all eleven such estates. Out of them, with the exception of two, in all the villages, arrears had accrued due to falling cultivation caused by the extreme poverty of khas cultivators and profusion of kans grass. The inability of the cultivators to take up land under cultivation always favoured the scrouge of kans to spread and

125. From A.W.Begbie, Coll. Banda To Commr. of Bundelkhand, 18th Jan. 1831. Progs. Sadar Bd. of Rev. N.W.P. on Deputation, March 1831, Vol.4, No.9 (U.P.S.A.L.).

126. From E.Currie, Actg. Coll. N.D. of Bundelkhand To R.M.Tilghman, Offg. Commr., 26th Sept. 1833. Progs. Sadar Bd. of Rev. N.W.P. Oct. 1833, Vol.24, No.11 (U.P.S.A.L.).

throw land into waste for prolonged periods.¹²⁷

The gradual atrophy reached its culmination in fasli 1241 (C.1833-34), when Bundelkhand was visited by pestilence and famine, "... such as have rarely afflicted so intensely any other portion of the globe".¹²⁸ The kharif crop failed and the rabi yield was not much better, the severity being greater in Hamirpur than in Banda.¹²⁹ This was accompanied by pestilence and a high rate of mortality. Unable to combat the calamity, people abandoned their villages. This together with death due to epidemic, denuded Hamirpur of almost half its population.¹³⁰ It was most severe in the Kunch, Kalpi, Hamirpur and Jalalpur parganas. In an enquiry set up soon after in the district, 36,987 houses were found inhabited while 38,196 were abandoned. A break-up of different classes of people showed that among the zamindars and pattidars, the number of abandoned houses were nearly half the number of inhabited ones. But among the cultivating assamies and other inhabitants, abandoned houses were much more than those occupied.¹³¹

127. From Dy. Coll. of Banda To M.Ainslie, Commr., 20th April 1830, 21st April 1830 & 26th April 1830. C.O.A. Basta No.78, Box No.233, Sl.No.7, File No.8 (U.P.R.A.A.)

128. From Coll. of Hamirpur To T.I.Turner, Commr. of Rev. Kanpur, 31st Aug. 1836. C.O.J. Basta No.73, Box No.221, Sl.No.9, File No.123 (U.P.R.A.A.).

129. A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1881, p.131; Report on the Settl. of Banda Dist. by W.W.Wright, Nov.1843. C.O.A. Basta No.24, Sl.No.13 (U.P.R.A.A.).

130. C.Allen, S.R.Parganas Sumerpur etc, 1842, p. 17.

131. From Coll. Hamirpur To T.I.Turner, 31st Aug.1836. C.O.A. Basta No.73, Box No.221, Sl.No.9, File No.123 (U.P.R.A.A.).

2.3 Years of Crisis, 1835-40

These years witnessed an intensification of the crisis that had been building up over the previous years. In some senses, they were to mark the culmination, demonstrating the bankruptcy of British rule dictated by expediency and immediate, short-term gains. Anticipating the breakdown that was to come, these five years acted as a kind of prelude to the decisive changes of the following decade.

Bundelkhand failed to pick up from the calamity of 1833-34. Cultivation fell and arrears of revenue mounted in spite of the small remission of revenue granted by Pidcock in Hamirpur.¹³² In four years, the region plunged into another crisis in 1837-38 when crops failed and a devastation worse than the one before, gripped it. This famine occurred in large parts of Doab and trans-Jamuna but in Bundelkhand it compounded the ravaging effects of 1833-34. The two droughts laid waste large tracts of land and in Kalpi and Hamirpur parganas, 72 villages were totally desolated.¹³³ The fearful depletion of resources clung to the memories of people for long as its effects were to be visible for many years to come.¹³⁴ Once again Banda escaped the intensity of the crisis in 1837-38 but in Hamirpur and eastern Jalaun it was disastrous.¹³⁵

132. W.E. Neale, S.R. Hamirpur, 1880, para 197.

133. Ibid, Appendix, paras 617-623, p. 126.

134. Frederick Henvey compiled, A Narrative of the Drought and Famine which prevailed in the N.W.P. during the years 1868, 1869 and beginning of 1871 (Allahabad 1870), p. 137.

135. C. Allen, S.R. parganas Sumerpur, etc., 1842, p. 17.

W. Muir who set out to make fresh settlements for parganas in Hamirpur and for Kunch and Kalpi in 1840-42 observed the havoc that successive calamities had wrought on the region. "No one", he remarked, "who has not toiled through the details of each village can conceive the extent of alienation of property or the misery attendant on the depopulation of villages, the ruin of estates and the disruption of society which has prevailed in this unhappy country". ¹³⁶

Both the periods of famines were marked by a remarkable increase in the incidents of crime and violence in Hamirpur as well as in Banda.¹³⁷ Frequent dacoities and plundering of Government treasure were reported in 1833-34.¹³⁸ The situation was duplicated four years later when, "Neither the stores of the merchants nor the grain in transit was safe from the attack. The starving people forgot all rights of possession, and violently laid their hands on their neighbours' supplies. In almost every district, a large police force had to be entertained". ¹³⁹

2.3.1 Jhansi & Jalaun

It was in the independent States of Jhansi and Jalaun that the crisis of 1830s and the accompanying crime and violence took a far more serious turn, endangering the very political existence of their rulers. Unable to meet the

135. Quoted in D.G.Jalaun (1909), pp. 33-34.

137. W.E.Neale, S.R.Hamirpur, 1880, Appendix, pp. 126-127.

138. A. Cadell, S.R.Banda, 1881, p. 81.

139. Mr. Girdlestone's Memoir on Increase of Crime, N.W.P. 1860-61. Crimes during the famine of 1860-61 as compared to those in 1837-38 in N.W.P., p. 300.

contingency, the rulers of Jhansi and Jalaun earnestly sought help from and active intervention of the English. This was^{the} beginning of a kind of situation that faced a number of Indian states in the 19th century in North India. In the wake of the ubiquitous presence of the British and especially their decisive economic intrusion in the form of commercial extraction and accelerated trading activities, these kingdoms along with the British governed districts were integrated into the matrix of a very wide ranging interaction directed by the East India Company and the foreign private traders. This rendered local economics particularly vulnerable to fluctuations of the new colonial trading pattern and placed them outside the pale of their rulers' control. Once the Chiefs found themselves losing effective control⁴ over the economies of their dominions, their political strength too began to sap, making them more and more dependant on the English. Direct British intervention and their eventual political take over was, thereafter, but a single step in the sequence.

Jhansi and Jalaun were major areas that supplied cotton for East India Company's trade. The progressive recession in cotton trade therefore, affected their agriculture as adversely as it did elsewhere. Even though local demand for cotton existed, the surplus production which had so long catered to the Chinese and London markets.. gradually became depressed. But even before the English demand for cotton had been withdrawn from Jhansi and Jalaun in 1833, three successive bad seasons ending in 1830-31, reduced almost the

entire agricultural population of this region to a state of beggary and hopeless indigence.¹⁴⁰ It was in the same year, that there was an exceptional increase in the incidents of thugi in these two states.¹⁴¹ Thugi was fairly rampant in this part of Bundelkhand and in 1824, the Ruler of Jhansi had been asked to make "exertions in checking the prevalence of that offence".¹⁴² But the increase of this crime in 1830-31, certainly went beyond the control of the English state machinery and this was particularly irksome to the government since the thugs operated even in the regulation districts. Unable to contain the spreading banditry, the English officials blamed the scattered independent States, particularly Datia and Orcha for harboring and sheltering the thugs. Some small jagirdars within Jhansi principality were also ^{held} guilty of similar offence. The Jagirdar of Khyrwa, a dependant of the Jhansi State was alleged to have connived in enabling a whole gang of thugs to escape.¹⁴³ Sleeman traced the difficulties of apprehending thugs to "... such a wide range and with the obstacles and impediments that present themselves in the clash of authority and jurisdiction at almost every stage ..." ¹⁴⁴

140. From W.H.Sleeman, 7th Jan. 1831. For Pol. Progs. 18th March 1831, No.11 (N.A.I.).

141. From the Agent at Gwalior To the Govt. Gen.'s Agent, Bundelkhand, 7th April 1834. For. Pol. Cons. 29th May 1834, No.25 (N.A.I.).

142. From M.Ainslie, To Princep, 29th March 1831. For. Dept. Misc. No.246 (N.A.I.).

143. From Camp. Sohagpur, 20th Jan. 1831. For. Pol. Progs. 18th March 1831, No.11 (N.A.I.).

144. From W.H.Sleeman, 7th Jan. 1831. For. Pol. Progs. 18th March 1831. No.11 (N.A.I.).

Tensions were carried over to 1833-34 when Jhansi and Jalaun suffered greatly from the staggering effects of an acute famine. Villages in Jhansi were plundered and burnt down, granaries looted and cattle taken away. Mahajans were frequently kidnapped and held for ransome. In one instance, harkaras (carriers) belonging to Jhansi and beoparies laden with grain from the Doab were seized and taken to a village in Orcha. The Raja sent forces against the insurgents who offered a determined resistance. He, thereafter, sought British help in the hope that their interference "... might have a restraining influence on his enemies from openly attacking Jhansi." ¹⁴⁵ The Raja blamed the Chiefs of Datia and Orcha for instigating rebellion within his dominion. He alleged that the latter had prompted a number of Tomandars and Jagirdars within his State to demand an increase of allowance and to revolt against him. They had not only provided the insurgents with asylum but allowed them to concert and nurture hostile measures against Jhansi. The Chiefs of Datia and Orcha were said to have motivated the Rajput gharibands of Tuktowli, Alipura, Udgaon, Jigna and Nuner to perpetrate outrages recently committed. ¹⁴⁶ The allegation brought by Jhansi against Datia and Orcha was adduced against Jhansi by Jalaun and was vehemently denied by Jhansi on the one hand and Datia and Orcha on the other. ¹⁴⁷ In Jalaun too,

145. Trans. of a letter from Maharaja of Jhansi to the Rt. Hon'ble the Gov.Gen. For. Ootacamund Pol. Cons. 15th Aug. 1834, Nos.40-41 (N.A.I.).

146. Ibid.

147. From M.Ainslie, Commr. Banda, To W.H.Macaughten, Secy. to Govt., 25th Nov. 1833. For. Ootacamund Pol. Cons. 19th Dec. 1833. No.67A (N.A.I.).

the forts of Gurserai, Goneh and Gauripur were forcibly captured by the Killadar of Surawan and Purwaha, villages were plundered and beoparies way laid.¹⁴⁸ A widespread disaffection and distress lay behind such outbursts in 1833-34, which some jagirdars in Jhansi aggrieved at the Raja's attempt to reduce them, took advantage of. The deep-seated animosity between the majority of Rajputs - Bundelas and Puars - and a handful of urban Mahratha rulers, only exacerbated the situation. The Chiefs and Jagirdars confronted conditions of crisis and not being able to contain them, gave vent to their dormant intolerance for members of other communities and as the allegations show, found in such incompatibility a ready-made explanation for the situation. Meanwhile, the uprising in Jhansi turned so serious that Ainslie the Commissioner of Bundelkhand feared that unless early measures were taken the "... stone walls of Jhansi will be the limit of his (Raja's) Raj".¹⁴⁹ The unrest continued unabated for a year. In April 1834, the British Agent in Gwalior wrote in alarm, "... the Jhansi plunderers are now extending their depredation in this direction after having plundered and laid waste the Jhansi country" and that "... the Jhansi subjects often pass into this territory to plunder villages and travellers."¹⁵⁰

148. A trans. of a letter from the Bai of Jalaun to the Rt. Hon'ble the Gov.Gen. n.d. For. Ootacamund Pol.Cons. 25th July 1834, Nos.28-29. (N.A.I.).

149. From M. Ainslie, To W.H.Macaughten, Banda, 25th Nov. 1833. For. Ootacamund Pol. Cons. 19th Dec. 1833, No.67A (N.A.I.).

150. From the Agent at Gwalior To the Gov.Gen's Agent. Bundelkhand, 7th April 1834. For. Pol. Cons. 29th May 1834, No.25 (N.A.I.).

2.3.2 Politics of Intervention

The acute crisis facing the independant principalities coupled with their internal and mutual dissensions increasingly drew the British State in the 1830s into more effective and direct intervention in their politics. On the 17th of January 1832, Bala Rao Gobind the Ruler of Jalaun died childless. Different cliques put up their own candidates claiming that the Raja had adopted each of them. The English Agent in Bundelkhand after enquiries, arrived at the decision that the Raja had adopted his wife's brother, Gobind Rao as his successor.¹⁵¹ The adoption was approved by the Court of Directors.¹⁵² But the boy being a minor, was placed under the guardianship of his sister.¹⁵³ Similar adoption by the Raja of Datia was likewise legitimised by the sanction of the British Government.¹⁵⁴ Differences that often arose between these several States with overlapping territories in Bundelkhand had to be settled through the mediation of the English Agent. The States of Jhansi, Jalaun, Orchha and Datia were perpetually at logger-heads with one another and hopeless dissensions vitiated relationship among them. The intervention of the sovereign State in this context

151. From the Agent Gov.Gen. in Bundelkhand To G.Swinton, Secy. to Govt., 8th Aug. 1832. For. Dept. Misc. No.246 (N.A.I.).

152. From the Gov. Gen. in Council, London, 16th Sept., 1835. For. Dept. Pol. Despatch from Court of Directors, No.41 of 1835 (N.A.I.).

153. D.G.Jalaun, Vol. XXV (1909), pp. 132-135.

154. From the Gov. Gen. in Council, London, 16th Sept. 1835. For. Dept. Pol. Despatch from Court of Directors, No.41 of 1835 (N.A.I.).

became crucial.¹⁵⁵ In 1835, the Raja of Jhansi appealed to the English that he be conferred with the title of Maharaja. On grounds of his having fulfilled the duties of a faithful ally and in consideration of his high status among the other Chiefs, the request was complied with.¹⁵⁶ Three years later in 1838, Jalaun was brought under temporary English superintendence for six years. The reason for assuming control of the State was that the Bai and her ministers had hopelessly mismanaged it, alienating large territories to Sahukars (Bankers) from Gwalior for loans transacted on terms, the English regarded most objectionable.¹⁵⁷

Scarcely had the Raja of Jhansi acquired the much coveted honour, than his kingdom was shaken by one of the most serious rebellions, decisively undermining his power and authority. Resistance in the Jhansi town was begun by soldiers of the Raja's army while the countryside caught in the desperate economic crisis of 1837-38, created a widespread ferment. The Raja disabled by circumstances, had allowed a large amount of arrears of pay due to the soldiers, to mount, with little hopes of them ever being cleared. This had been creating tension among the troops for quite sometime.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile in

155. Ibid, From Bundelkhand Agency Office Banda, To W.H. Macaughten, 19th Dec. 1833. For. Pol. Progs. 3rd Jan. 1834, Nos.102-105 (N.A.I.).

156. From the Gov. Gen. in Council, London, 16th Sept. 1835. For. Dept. India Pol. Despatch from Court of Directors, No.41 of 1835 (N.A.I.).

157. From S. Fraser To I. Sutherland, Resident at Gwalior, 18th Aug. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, Nos.15-16. (N.A.I.).

158. From I. Sutherland, To S. Fraser, 13th Nov. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 13th Feb. 1839, No.41 (N.A.I.).

April 1838, in the wake of an agrarian scarcity, villages began to be plundered and merchants waylaid and in a month's time the situation in the State went totally out of the Raja's control. Seeking English help, the Raja's mukhtiar in a letter to S. Fraser, the Agent at Banda, held a certain Lala Bakshi, a merchant of Jhansi responsible for all that had taken place. On some difference over financial transactions with the Raja, Lala Bakshi had taken asylum in Gwalior. There, it was alleged, Lala Bakshi collected armed followers for the purpose of committing outrages in Jhansi and all that happened was said to have been instigated by him in defiance of the charges implicated against him.¹⁵⁹ On the 1st of October, one of Raja's officials was murdered while he was returning home with Lala Bakshi at about 9 p.m. He was killed by some Gosains and Silladars in the employment of the Raja. The incident caused great excitement and Gangadhar Rao now ascribed the whole affair to the machination of the Dowagar Queen, the mother of the former Raja, Ramchand Rao.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, by November 1838, the districts in Jhansi were found fast falling into disorders.¹⁶¹ It was in the context of such a crisis and the Raja's total impotence that the English decided to take over the administration of the State.¹⁶²

159. From S. Fraser, To W.H.Macaughten, 24th May 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 17th Oct. 1838, No.59 (N.A.I.).

160. From Agent to the Gov.Gen. Bundelkhand, Camp Mahoba, To Secy. to the Gov. Gen. 10th Oct. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

161. From I. Sutherland, Gwalior Residency, 9th Nov. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 17th April 1839, No.42 (N.A.I.).

162. From Agent to the Gov. Gen. Bundelkhand, Camp Mahoba, To Secy. to the Gov. Gen. 10th Oct. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

S.I.Fraser, the English Agent arrived at Jhansi from Banda to occupy the fort, accompanied by 26th Native Infantry Regiment from Sagar. The Agent soon perceived that "... parties in the place had no friendly feeling towards my proceedings and, owing to the very small number, and weak state of the detachment from Saugor, I should meet with great difficulty in establishing my influence in the Territory." ¹⁶³ Large number of men in straggling order poured into the fort from outside the town, while among those already inside, there were about 900 armed men. None were too well disposed to the English presence. ¹⁶⁴ Apart from taking over the town, the primary concern of the British was to protect the banias and safeguard their property. Proper communication with them was thus regarded necessary and their valuable belongings carried away to safer places. ¹⁶⁵

The large body of armed men present in Jhansi subscribed separately to the authorities of Gangadhar Rao and Bai, the mother of Ramchand Rao. Animosity between them had reached such extents that on the 2nd of November, the Vakil of the Raja complained that he was not being able to procure wood and grass for his soldiers because Bai had set up her subordinates over the stores and they would not attend to his requisition. The

163. From S.I.Fraser, Agent to the Gov.Gen. To W.H. Macaughten, Secy. to the Gov.Gen. of India, 6th Nov. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

164. From S. Fraser, To Lt. Col. Hewitt, Commdg. 25th Regt. N.I, 4th Nov. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

165. From Hewitt, To Fraser, Camp. Jhansi, 4th Nov. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

Bai eventually agreed to withdraw all armed men stationed at different posts. But when the English proceeded to enter the fort, while some soldiers offered no resistance, others refused to give way till their arrears of salary were paid. They made room for the English but refused to leave the gates. The English assured them that all their dues would be met but failed to persuade them to quit. All through the afternoon of 2nd November, men continuously came flocking in, into the town.¹⁶⁶

On the 3rd morning, Fraser decided to go personally and speak to the leaders inside the fort. He went alone with only three chaprassis unarmed and one sowar to attend on them. The Agent later recalled,

"We were allowed to advance unmolested but on approaching the Fort we had to pass through a narrow lane which we had scarcely entered when being observed from the Fort, the drum was beaten and all parties kept on the alert, not allowing myself to be deterred by the demonstration, I pushed forward, but immediately we appeared at the entrance of the lane, in front of the Fort we were clamourously desired to stop, the chuprassies, then, cried out, that we were alone, and wished to speak to their leaders. But on my Elephant again advancing, a part of about hundred footmen armed with guns, spears, and swords, darted out from the mass and in spite of all remonstrances twelve or fourteen of the foremost began forcibly to drive us back. I tried to address them, but fruitlessly, and one of my chuprassies having been wounded, (not seriously) by a spear, and the disturbance momentarily increasing I thought it unfair to risk the lives of those with me, and I desired the Mahaut to turn back. We were then assaulted by the most abusive language, my Elephant was wounded by a spear, and narrowly escaped other injuries from sword cuts made at the Howdah - rubbish was thrown

166. From S.I.Fraser, To W.H.Macaughten, 6th Nov.1838.
For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

at us - one gun was levelled at the Howdah, which providentially flashed in the pan, one or two other guns were fired and demonstrations of angry feeling pursued us ..."

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The Agent hastily retreated to Orcha.

The entire episode was seen as a premeditated act of Bai and her advisors, whose claims to put Kishan Rao, the adopted son of Ramchand Rao on the throne, after the latter's death, were set aside by the British Government. Now the argument ran that they were determined to resist English occupation so as to be able to keep their own authority intact.¹⁶⁸

The Bai, in her own defence said that the soldiers had long being clamorous for their pay, which had never been met. Now, on hearing that the English were to take over they feared that their arrears would never be cleared. When the sahibs were seen approaching, the soldiers immediately got armed, came out to the front of the fort and exclaimed, "who-soever wished to be master of the Fort, must first pay up our arrears".¹⁶⁹ The Raja was in no position to pay, for already he had 4 lakhs of outstanding debt to the Sahukars of Gwalior and the Rani of Jalaun had even a larger amount.¹⁷⁰

The English were finally able to take possession of the fort on the 5th of January 1839 after Bai evacuated it.

167. Ibid.

168. Ibid.

169. Trans. of a Mahratta letter of Sookho Bae, Mother of Ramchund Rao Sahib, deceased Chief of Jhansi, 9th Nov. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 13th Feb. 1839, No.41 (N.A.I.).

170. From S.I.Fraser, To W.H.Macaughten, 6th Nov. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

Similar opposition was offered in Jalaun too. In October 1838, the English Agent at Banda apprehended "... similar disposition to resist the constituted authorities ..." in the northern portions of Jalaun.¹⁷¹ Already it was learnt that a large number of soldiers disbanded by the Jalaun State were moving around the country and levying sums of money on villages so as to make good the accumulated arrears of pay that they were entitled to.¹⁷² Lt. Doolan & Fraser soon after went to Jalaun to make revenue assessments and remodel establishment. The former was affected without much difficulties but the latter faced resistance from the soldiers, whose protests however, the British put down with force. As for those who had scattered around in the country, the leaders among them were apprehended and asked to surrender on promise of settlement of their claims.¹⁷³ For quite some-time after, Doolan had to contend with opposition as was offered by small Chiefs commanding petty forts around Mote. On 18th December 1838, between seven and eight hundred erst-while soldiers of the Jalaun State entered and forcibly occupied Doolan's camp '... in a state of open mutiny'. They were induced to leave, but when Doolan called the headmen of the different bands of soldiers and asked them to stand guarantee for the good behaviour of their men, all except two declined. The soldiers clamoured for their arrears of pay to be met.¹⁷⁴

171. From Agent to the Gov.Gen. Banda, 5th Oct. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

172. From Agent to the Gov.Gen. To Secy. to the Gov. Gen. Camp. Mahoba, 10th Oct. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

173. From S.I.Fraser, To W.H.Macaughten, Secy. to the Gov.Gen. Camp. Orcha, 6th Nov.1838. For. Pol.Progs. 6th Feb. 1839, No.16 (N.A.I.).

174. From S.Fraser, Camp.Bhojpoora, To W.H.Macaughten, 20th Dec.1838. For.Pol.Progs.13th Feb.1839.No.41 (N.A.I.).

In reality, the decision of the English State to take over the administration of Jhansi caused great concern among the independant Chiefs of Bundelkhand and the neighbouring areas. I. Sutherland, the Resident at Gwalior, in a letter to Fraser related the anxiety these States felt at the Government's decision. "Advantage has been taken of what has happened at Jhansi to disseminate an impression that this is only the first step on the part of our Government to declare itself successor to all principalities where the sovereign dies without issue ..."

The gradual spread of British power over Jhansi and Jalaun and more effective measures of internal consolidation in the other districts of Bundelkhand though inevitable in the course of events could not be accomplished without overcoming active opposition. The opposition was to spread among a wider section of people as British presence increasingly impinged on local society with the opening of the next decade.

2.4 Paramountcy, Resistance and Rebellion, 1840-57

In the last fifteen years of East India Company's rule in Bundelkhand, developments of the past three decades reached their anticipated culmination. British political consolidation over this region was completed, government measures were now undertaken with the long term purpose of ensuing effective English presence here, if not precipitating decisive changes to agree with the English notions of property and governance. Thirty years of progressive economic and political

175. From I.Sutherland, To S.I.Fraser, Gwalior, 23rd Nov. 1838. For. Pol. Progs. 13th Feb. 1839, No.41 (N.A.I.).

dislocation also carried the economy of Bundelkhand to a state of incorrigible decay. Finally, as British rule directly intervened and threatened the existence of people at all levels, the latter's response to the changing context became more articulate either through overt protests or involuted resistance to the overwhelming situation. What is important for the study of this period is that these three features, changing nature of British rule, its effects and the reactions of the people to them, no longer allowed sequentially segregated description and treatment as distinct variables of analysis. Instead as developments took each of them almost simultaneously to their respective points of climax, considerable overlapping among them denied the possibilities of placing them within the paradigm of causes and effects. They ceased to be constant factors by themselves but became variables affecting one another and contributing to the complex whole that was reflected in the state of Bundelkhand on the eve of 1857.

1840s opened with the contours of British State progressively spreading to outline larger and larger territories till by the middle of the next decade, four separate districts were formed to comprise the Bundelkhand division. The infant Raja of Jalaun, Gobind Rao died in 1840 when his possessions permanently lapsed to the British. They included parganas Jalaun, Orai, Ata, Mahoba and Mote which together formed the first Jalaun district. In 1841, the confiscated jagir of Chirgaon and early in 1843 parganas Duboh and Garautha which the Raja of Jhansi assigned to the English for defraying half

the cost of the Bundelkhand Legion were also incorporated to the newly formed district. By the treaty of 1844, Scindia of Gwalior handed over Bhandere, Indurkhi and Madhogarh, the Kuchwahagar tract to the English and in 1849, the Jaitpur estate was taken in, all these acquisitions to be taken care of by the Superintendent at Jalaun.¹⁷⁶

Kuchwahagar apart, Scindia also transferred his share of possessions in the Chanderi district in 1844 to the English. They now formed the Lalitpur sub-division. The Banpur principality, however, was to remain independent.¹⁷⁷

Jhansi was being temporarily governed by the English between 1839 and 1842, after which it was returned to Gangadhar Rao. In 1853, the Raja's health began to deteriorate alarmingly and this engaged the officials in a series of correspondence to decide about the future of Jhansi. D.A.Malcolm, the Political Agent for Gwalior, Bundelkhand and Rewah, wrote to Major Ellis, the Political Assistant in Bundelkhand on the 29th October 1853, that he feared Gangadhar Rao's early demise. It had already been decided that since the Raja had no direct heir, any adoption would not be allowed. Ellis was therefore, instructed that he should proceed to Jhansi so as to be present at the time of the Raja's death and to be able to take over the administration immediately.¹⁷⁸ This was during the

176. D.G. Jalaun, Vol.XXV (1909), p. 83.

177. Col. J.Davidson, 1871, Report on the Settlement of Lullutpore, para 64.

178. Correspondence between Maj. D.A.Malcolm, Pol.Agent, Gwalior, Bundelkhand, Rewah & The Secy. to the Govt. of India, Amola, 3rd Nov. 1853; and From Malcolm, To R.W.W.Ellis, Pol.Asstt. in Bundelkhand, 29th Oct. 1853. For. Pol. Progs.. 2nd Dec. 1853, Nos.362-365 (N.A.I.). D.G.Jalaun, Vol.XXV(1909), pp. 131-132.

administration of Dalhousie who firmly adhered to the growing belief that it was the duty of the English Government to confer the blessings of its rule to the people under the care of Indian rulers. He therefore, lost little opportunity to bring territories directly under British governance, permitting no consideration of treaty or law to stand in the way.¹⁷⁹ However, in fairness it should be acknowledged that Dalhousie only brought to a logical conclusion the trend that his predecessors, Auckland, Ellenborough and Hastings had well begun. The power of the Indian Princes were being progressively reduced, their sovereignty increasingly invaded upon and through the application of British claims of lapse, escheat, control and confiscation, they were being forced to give up large portions of their territories.¹⁸⁰

Conforming to official predictions, Gangadhar Rao died in 1853 and his kingdom lapsed to the British State, henceforth to ^{be} governed as a separate district. Administrative arrangements now had to be freshly defined to accommodate these acquisitions. Between 1838 and 1853, Jalaun and later Chanderi had been placed under superintendents subordinate to the Political Agent of the Governor-General in Bundelkhand and the Commander-in-Chief.¹⁸¹ After Jhansi was brought in, reshuffling and fresh redistribution of territories were undertaken to constitute more coherent units of administration. Jalaun transferred Jaitpur and Mahoba to Hamirpur and parganas Mote,

179. K.M.Panikkar, op.cit., pp. 65-66.

180. Ibid, p. 64.

181. D.G. Jhansi, Vol.XXIV (1909), pp. 131-132.

Duboh and Garautha to Jhansi, gaining from the former Kunch and Kalpi instead.¹⁸²

Jalaun, Jhansi and Chanderi were administered separately by Deputy Superintendents in subordination to a Superintendent at Jhansi and enjoying powers of a Commissioner. The Deputy Superintendents of Jalaun and Jhansi had all the prerogatives of Collectors while that of Chanderi acted as a Sadar Amin and appeals from his decisions lay with the Superintendent.¹⁸³ Bundelkhand was also broken up into two separate divisions. The Regulation districts of Banda and Hamirpur were put in 1822 - and continued to be so - under the charge of the Central Board whose jurisdictions sprawled over the provinces of Bihar and Benaras and Gorakhpur and first sat at Patna and later at Allahabad.¹⁸⁴ Jalaun, Jhansi and Chanderi were on the other hand, attached to the Sagar and Narmada Territories which in the 1850s still formed a part of the North-Western Provinces.¹⁸⁵

Judicial and revenue affairs of the North-Western Provinces were administered chiefly through the Sadar Court at Agra, with the exception of the Superintendent at Jhansi, who exercised full powers of a Sadar Court in Civil matters. A set of revised rules of Civil procedure were devised in 1854-55 to be enforced in the Sagar and Bundelkhand districts.

182. Ibid, D.G.Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), p. 97.

183. D.G.Jhansi, Vol.XXIV (1909), pp. 131-132.

184. D.G.Hamirpur, Vol.XXII (1909), p. 97.

185. D.G.Jhansi, Vol.XXIV (1909), pp. 131-132.

In criminal cases, however, these districts had no distinct jurisdiction and conformed to the regulations applicable to the entire North-Western Provinces.¹⁸⁶

The system of police enforced in Banda and Hamirpur was now extended to the newly-founded western districts, with thanas set up at required points and out-post jamadars within their jurisdiction adding to their vigilance. A later modification though undertaken in exceptional circumstances, was to invest some tahsildars with superior control of police. The funds for the Municipal police and conservance of big towns were derived chiefly by levying a chowkidari tax on the inhabitants for whom it was an additional and often oppressive burden. The impost was also extended to smaller towns and bazars in the interior of districts.¹⁸⁷

For the protection of its extended dominions, the British State instituted its first military establishment exclusively for Bundelkhand called the Jalaun Legion. It began as a modest force whose strength was raised after Jhansi was acquired and renamed the Bundelkhand Legion with headquarters at Jhansi.¹⁸⁸ The Legion was later replaced by regular troops in Bundelkhand and cantonments were built in the four district towns.

186. Report on the Admn. of Public Affairs in the N.W.P. for the year 1855-56. Gen. Report on the Admn. of the several Presidencies & Provinces in British India during the year 1855-56. Part I. (Calcutta, 1857), p.16.

187. Ibid, pp. 25, 37-38.

188. Gen. Orders by the Rt. Hon'ble the Gov.Gen. of India in Council, Fort William, 4th April 1844. For. Sec. Progs. 4th May 1844. No.123 (N.A.I.).

British assumption of effective sovereign authority over Bundelkhand led to a natural circumscription of the privileges, prescriptions and even prestige of the erstwhile rulers of independent States. Laxmi Bai, the widow of Gangadhar Rao was granted a pension and immunity from the jurisdiction of British courts, the only deference paid to her former status. It was earlier proposed that she should be deported to Benaras but the suggestion on grounds of expediency was later laid aside. Her absence from Jhansi, the English feared, would cause great sorrow and apprehension among the residents of the town and in addition would "... entail serious loss to the town, in which she was the occasion of a good deal of money being circulated,"¹⁸⁹ a financial decrement, the East India Company wished to avoid. Laxmi Bai earnestly requested that she be placed under the charge of the Agent to the Governor-General rather than under that of the Collector as she felt the latter measure would considerably impair her status. She wrote to the Governor-General in person,¹⁹⁰ but her request was turned down on grounds that if complied, there would be a divided and double jurisdiction within the town of Jhansi. The English regarded Laxmi Bai and her ulterior motives with some suspicion. Objecting strongly to her proposals, W.Muir, the Secretary to the Government of N.W.P. wrote, "It is improbable that the

189. From R.Hamilton, Agent to the Gov.Gen. for C.India To Cecil Beadon, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Indore Agency, 29th May 1855. For. Pol. Progs. 28th Dec. 1858, Nos.34-38 (N.A.I.).

190. Trans. of a letter from the Rani of Jhansi To the Most Hon'ble the Gov.Gen. of India, 8th May 1855. For. Pol. Progs. 28th Dec. 1858, Nos.39-40 (N.A.I.).

Lady has really much personal feeling on the point, other than as connected with the hopes which she still indulges of being able to regain independent possession of territory.¹⁹¹ Laxmi Bai was allowed during her lifetime, only one tract of grass and a stretch of jungle for fuel, within twenty miles of Jhansi to be selected by the Superintendent.¹⁹² The rest of Gangadhar Rao's possession, including the revenue of two villages traditionally kept aside for the maintenance of a Laxmi temple in Jhansi, were resumed. Another order was passed to the effect that the revenue of village Sambardah which had been given rent free for the support of a tomb of Gangadhar Rao's mistress should be paid to two of the late mistress' female relatives, instead of Laxmi Bai.¹⁹³ The erstwhile Rani was in short told in no uncertain terms the exact limits of her diminished stature.

The authority of the new Nawab of Banda, Ali Bahadur was likewise invaded upon. Ali Bahadur succeeded his father Zulfiqar Ali in 1849 but to much reduced privileges. The English officials felt that altered circumstances since the accession of Zulfiqar Ali, warranted the discontinuance of many of the former's prerogatives to his son. Ali Bahadur was to enjoy exemption from the Civil Court during his life

191. From W.Muir, Secy. to Govt. of the N.W.P. To G.F. Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India, with Gov. Gen. For. Dept. 6th Oct. 1855. For. Pol. Progs. 28th Dec. 1855, Nos. 43-44 & K.W. (N.A.I.).

192. From W.Muir, Secy. to the Govt. of the N.W.P. To G.I. Christian, Secy. Sadar Board of Rev. N.W.P. Lalitpur, 19th Dec. 1854. Sadar Bd. of Rev. Progs. N.W.P. Vol. 572, 5th Jan. 1855, No. 1 (U.P.S.A.L.).

193. Narrative of Events attending the Outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the Division of Jhansi, in 1857-58 (U.P.S.A.L.)
By Capt. J.W. Pinkney, 20th Nov. 1858, paras 2-7.
pp. 508-509.

time. But he was asked to disband the entire artillery and "... so much of the Infantry and Cavalry as to leave only such a retinue as a person of the Nawab's rank might be reasonably allowed to entertain. The Governor-General did not object to twenty-five sowars and one company of foot soldiers." ¹⁹⁴ Nothing was to be conceded to Ali Bahadur which could by any means be construed as an acknowledgement of sovereignty, chiefship or independence. No gun salutes were to be allowed and he was not to be styled 'Nawab of Banda' but simply 'Nawab' in addition to his name. ¹⁹⁵

While consolidating their political presence in Bundelkhand, the English once again turned with renewed interest to this region's potentials for producing cotton. Two successive calamities had adversely affected agriculture in Bundelkhand and especially its cotton outgrowth. To give its production the required impetus all over Northern India, ten persons conversant with the growth, cultivation, cleaning and packing of cotton in the United States were employed in 1840. ¹⁹⁶

Among them, T. Bayles was appointed the Superintendent of cotton plantations in Bundelkhand where he was to conduct experimental cultivation of cotton on American principles.

- For that purpose, it was proposed that an entire village would be taken up instead of portions of land in any one, and four

194. Narrative for the months of July, Aug. & Sept. 1849, Banda. Agra Narratives 1844-1852, p. 781 (U.P.S.A.I.).

195. Ibid.

196. From I.Thomason To L.R.Reid, Chief Secy. to the Govt., 15th Sept. 1840. Rev. Dept. Fibre & Silk Branch, 5th Oct. 1840, No.28129 (N.A.I.).

such villages were selected in Hamirpur to try out the experiment. They were Kotra Mukrundpur, Rath Khas, Sumerpur Khas and Chownk, all of which had fallen heavily in balance and had been attached over time to the Government.¹⁹⁷ Separate planters were recruited for each of the villages, I.W.Blonat for Sumerpur, F.J.Terry for Chownk, T.I.Finnie for Kotra Mukrundpur and M.R.Mercer for Rath.¹⁹⁸ These planters were directed to give pattas to all cultivators who wished to take up land and to try every 'fair means' to get these cultivators into adopting improved methods of cultivation.¹⁹⁹ The planters, however, found peasants seldom keen on taking pattas from them, for cultivating cotton. They did so only on persuasion and after being granted advances. The planters therefore set out to cultivate land themselves after the American system with hired farm hands, in the kharif season of 1841. They not only planted cotton but on smaller plots of land grew bajra and other kharif grains as well.²⁰⁰ All the planters were very hopeful about prospects of cotton cultivation in Bundelkhand.²⁰¹ But growing cotton in this novel fashion

197. From R.Lowther, Comms. 4th Div. To the Sadar Bd. of Rev. N.W.P., 16th Sept. 1841. Home Rev. Progs. Jan to Feb. 1842, Sl.No.43, 17th Jan. 1842, No.14 (N.A.I.).

198. On Experimental Cotton Cultivation in Hamirpur. From T.Bayles, Suptd. Cotton Plantations, n.d.Land Rev. Records, 17th Jan. 1842, No.42 (N.A.I.).

199. From T. Bayles, To R.Lowther, 12th June 1844. Home Rev. Progs. Jan to Feb. 1842, Sl.No.43, 17th Jan. 1842, No.14 (N.A.I.).

200. From I.W.Blonat, Sumerpur, 14th Nov. 1841. From F.J.Terry, Chownk, 10th Nov.1841; From T.I.Finnie, Kotra Mukrandpur, 13th Nov. 1841; From M.R.Mercer, Rath, 1st Nov. 1841. Land Rev. Records, 17th Jan. 1842, No.202 (N.A.I.).

201. Ibid.

never really caught on with the people of Bundelkhand and the entire experiment had to be given up in another year's time.

The immediate British concern was, however, taken by land settlements and revenue assessments in their newly acquired possessions. Land in Jalaun was first settled in 1840 for a year and then again in 1841 for five years. Unfamiliar with the region, settlements were made summarily based on deficient and imperfect data showing a revenue much above what the country could properly pay. This led to a progressive escalation of Government demand. From the amount that was fixed in 1840, there was an addition of 39% to the jama in 1841-45 (Rs. 1,63,328).²⁰²

In the two Regulation districts of Banda and Hamirpur, fresh assessments based for the first time, on proper scientific survey of land and their rents certainly augured long-term changes for the countryside in this part of Bundelkhand. Assessments were truly made noticeably lighter and every English official emphasised the need for it. But the decisive change was brought in the realm of land holding pattern which was restructured to suit the needs of the rulers and to agree with their imported notions of proprietary rights. W.S.Wright worked out the settlement for Banda in 1841 while Charles Allen and William Muir settled lands in Hamirpur in 1842. Allen assessed the eastern parganas of Sumerpur, Maudha, Rath,

202. P.J.White, Settlement Report of the District of Jalaun, 1870 (Allahabad, 1889), From B.P.Lloyds, Commr. of the Jhansi Div. To W.C.Plowden, Secy. Board of Rev. Jhansi, 30th Nov. 1869, pp. 2 & 9-10.

Panwari and Khurka and Muir, the parganas Kunch, Kalpi, Hamirpur and Jalalpur-Khurela in the west.²⁰³

A detailed land survey and evaluation of soils preceded the computation of rent per acre on different species of soil, and an average pargana rate. In Banda, the jama for the whole district was then calculated and the total amount distributed over all the parganas with due consideration to the caste and character of the zamindars and peasants and the relative productivity of soils which varied considerably. The assessment on the whole was much reduced in view of the total absence of irrigation, scanty and impoverished population and the quantity of banjar land.²⁰⁴ Comparing the calculated total revenue demand for all the parganas under his charge with their past assessments and present conditions, William Muir discovered that large scale remissions were urgently called for.²⁰⁵ Calamities of over-assessment and famine had prestrated a large number of estates so completely, that it was impossible to tell what their actual capabilities might have been. Muir, therefore, reduced the rent and revenue rates so as to leave the cultivators and proprietors enough surplus to counterbalance the disadvantages suffered so long. The total jama was then distributed among the parganas according to the amount of fallow land each contained.

203. Report on the Settl. of the Banda dist. by W.W.Wright, Dy. Coll & S.O. Banda, Nov.1843. C.O.A. Basta No.204, Sl.No.13 (U.P.R.A.A.); W.Muir, S.R.Calpi parganas, 1842; C.Allen, S.R.Parganas Sumerpur etc, 1842.

204. Report on the Settl. of Banda dist. by W.W.Wright, Nov.1843. C.O.A. Basta No.204, Sl.No.13 (U.P.R.A.A.).

205. W.Muir, S.R.Calpee Parganas 1842, pp. 16-19.

"A main object of the present settlement is to win back the confidence which has deservedly been lost," the officer remarked.²⁰⁶

The jama that Charles Allen proposed for the eastern parganas of Hamirpur after enquiring into the ruinous effects of assessments was considerably less than the rates calculated. Allen found pargana Panwari and to a lesser extent, Rath in a state of total despair. More than half the uninhabited villages of the district were in Panwari and more than a quarter in Rath. The soil particularly of Panwari had never been as good as in the other sub-divisions and the deficiency of rains was felt more severely here. In the early years of British rule therefore, when the eastern parganas had to some extent prospered due to an increase in cultivation and tolerably favourable seasons, Panwari staggered under heavy and unabated revenue demand. Balance had accumulated yearly and from many villages peasants were forced to flee to neighbouring princely States.²⁰⁷

The primary objective of all the three settlements seemed to have been, however, to break up the bhaiachara estates and to do away with the long established practices of revenue distribution. Land was completely divided both by Wright in Banda and Muir in western Hamirpur in thoks, behris, pattis and in some cases even wastelands were separated. The division was set on an independent footing and every holding distinctly

206. Ibid, pp. 19-20, 42-44.

207. C.Allen, S.R.Parganas Soomerpoor, Moudha, etc. 1842, p. 11.

and separately taxed so that the amount each proprietor had to pay for the next thrity year period remained neither in doubt nor left with any chance of alteration. The precise right of individual proprietor, his various liabilities and the legal demands on him were ascertained and registered in deeds and placed beyond the possibility of any dispute.²⁰⁸

In dividing the joint-proprietary estates into thokes and pattis, Charles Allen made an exception in the eastern parganas of Hamirpur. He found in a number of instances proprietors of mahals, living in the same village but their lands intermixed one with the other. In such cases, he preferred that the interests be so ~~di~~vided that the property of every proprietor lay together. But till such time as the holders themselves agreed to the division of their joint property, it was kept united. In others, however, strict separation was insisted upon.²⁰⁹

Cotton experiments, property mutations marked the change in English policies reflecting confidence that the new State exuded. The circumspection that it had shown hitherto in Bundelkhand was replaced by a degree of determination in the conception and execution of its political and economic measures, with the ~~avowed~~ purpose of bringing long-term changes here to suit their notions of property and for their self interests. For Bundelkhand and its people, British State increasingly became a reality close at hand that threatened to intervene more and more into their existing system. What earlier had

208. Report on the Settl. of the Banda dist. by W.W.Wright, Nov.1843. C.O.A. Basta No.204, Sl.No.13.(U.P.R.A.A.); W.Muir, S.R.Calpee Pargs., 1842. p. 57.

209. W.Muir, S.R.Calpee Pargs., 1842, p. 61.

been a distant though oppressive extractor of revenue surplus, now came within the range of cognition as the apparatus that not only imposed greater burden but claimed more conquest over their traditional rights and privileges.

The response of the people to such invasion was often resistance to the new state machinery and the first to offer such resistance were the ghariband thakurs of Jhansi.

On taking temporary possession of the district in 1839, the British found some ghariband thakurs up in arms. Traditionally the thakurs of Jhansi indulged in a practice of occasionally overrunning villages outside their estates and levying a tax called 'Taki' on the people, that acted as a sort of insurance against their frequent raids on the villages. This demand had been so systematised that certain tracts of land were assigned to each family of thakurs and within this the others stayed away from interfering. Now, at a time when the authority of Gangadhar Rao gave way to the British, the change of rulers induced them to resume their raids again. From 1839, these thakurs withheld all revenue payments and much to the concern of the English Agent in Bundelkhand, ".... continued to act in a spirit of independence of control

...." ²¹⁰ The thakurs guilty of such transgression were those of Noner, Jigni, Bilhari and Udgaon, all Bundelas of great influence in the immediate neighbourhood of Jhansi. To bring them around to accept the English order, S. Fraser,

210. From S.Fraser, Agent Gov.Gen. Bundelkhand, To Offg. Secy. to the Govt. N.W.P., 8th March 1840. For. Pol. Progs. 6th April, 1840, no. 53 (N.A.I.).

the Agent for Bundelkhand and D. Rose, the Agent at Jhansi met the four thakurs at Udgaon on the 22nd of March 1840, "... in order to ascertain distinctly what were their specific claims and how far they might be yielded consistently with the fair right of the Government ..." ²¹¹ The thakurs claimed exemptions from all payments and their right to levy Taki within limits assigned to each by mutual consent. Neither of the demands was acceptable to the English and their notion of the State's right over all social surplus. The Agents, however, conceded in deference to their status, that the thakurs would be left in possession of all the land they were found to be holding. But they would have to pay annual revenue to the Government. They were asked to make good immediately, the security for the yearly payment of revenue of the former year, which they had kept back and the instalment for the present rabi season. The Thakur of Udgaon agreed after some persuasion but the Ubaridars of Noner, Jigni and Bilhari resolutely refused to give in to the terms of the English. Their refusal the officials felt "... proceeded more from their determinations not to recognise control than from any objection to the sum claimed". ²¹²

Negotiations having failed, Fraser and Ross issued dastaks on each thakur, intimating them that the unpaid arrears of revenue should be cleared within ten days. The Udgaon thakurs agreed to give banker's security for claims against

211. Ibid.

212. Ibid.

them but the others still refused. On the 3rd of April 1840, while the English camp moved from Udgaon to Noner, the Tahsildar of Kurera was sent with some sowars to Jigni to summon the thakurs or their yakils and to secure supplies for the camp. At night, the Tahsildar and his men were surrounded by a large body of armed men who threatened to open fire on them if they did not leave. The Tahsildar was, thereafter, recalled, further negotiations terminated and official notices sent to each that if the Government revenue remained unpaid even after the term of the dastak expired, their lands would be liable to resumption by the Government.²¹³ The officials resolved to wait till the 8th of April and if the thakurs still remained recusant, the English would move in to occupy their lands directly. In the face of resolute resistance that the thakurs were expected to offer, the rulers could only accomplish their end through military intervention.²¹⁴

Capt. Beadon, the Commandant of the Bundelkhand Legion, was therefore, asked to move as large a detachment as would be available for service against the garhis of Noner, Jigni and Bilhari.²¹⁵ The force accompanied by Ross and Fraser first marched against Noner which they found deserted. It was in Jigni that one of the thakurs and armed men were found entrenched in strong positions of attack, determined to resist

213. From D.Ross, Agent at Jhansi, To S.Fraser, Agent Gov.Gen. at Bundelkhand, 5th March 1840. For. Pol. Progs. 6th April 1840. No.53 (N.A.I.).

214. From S.Fraser, To D.Ross, 6th March 1840. For. Pol. Progs. 6th April 1840, No.53 (N.A.I.).

215. From D.Ross, To S.Fraser, 7th March 1840. For. Pol. Progs. 6th April 1840, No.53 (N.A.I.).

the British force. It was only after a fair amount of battle and mutual exchange of fire that the thakur and his men dispersed and Jigni was evacuated. The fall of Bilhari followed in quick succession.²¹⁶

Even though subverted, Fraser feared that outright resumption of their land would "... alarm the whole class of Thakurs in the Territory, and would drive them probably to resistance and plunder, ..." He suggested instead that fresh engagements should be made with the thakurs of Udgaon, Noner and Bilhari to persuade them to abstain from demanding 'Taki' and from all acts of violence, to produce their horsemen and guards or pay an equivalent sum and to discharge by half yearly instalments the amount specified in their revenue deeds. They were to confine interference to their own estates only. A reward of Rs.500/- was proclaimed for the apprehension of Dewan Dalip Singh, the principal Thakur of Jigni and all the villages belonging to this estate was proposed to be assumed.²¹⁷ Fraser's proposals were accepted entirely.²¹⁸

Scarcely had the thakurs of Jigni, Noner and Bilhari been put down than fresh spell of rebellion broke out in 1842. Begun this time too by the thakurs, the uprising

216. From S.Fraser, To J.Thomason, Secy. to the Lt. Gov. N.W.P., 14th March 1840; From W.Beadon, Capt. Comdg. Bundelkhand Legion, Camp. Jigni, 11th March 1840. For. Pol. Progs. 6th April 1840, No.53 (N.A.I.).

217. Ibid.

218. From J.Thomason, To S.Fraser, 21st March 1840. For. Pol. Progs. 6th April 1840, No.53 (N.A.I.).

was to spread and absorb the disaffection of other non-Rajputs too. The first scene of rebellion was the southern fringes of Lalitpur in the area bordering the Sagar district. On the evening of 8th April, about 2,000 Bundelas 'horse and foot', identified chiefly as the followers of the Ubaridar of Gurha and those of the son of the Jagirdar of Narhat (both in Sagar) assembled in the garden of Rao Baiji Bahadur, the Chief of Narhat. Nine sowars with an acting Duffadar of Cavalry posted there, were suddenly attacked by the Bundelas and being taken unawares forced to disperse. The Tahsildar of Narhat was imprisoned and the Bundelas stationed as guards at every post of the fort. The following day, which was the 9th, an even larger gathering of men forced into the town of Khemlassa, wounded the chowkidars and barkandazes and plundered the place.²¹⁹ The Rajputs gathered in large numbers on the south-west boundary of Hamirpur and taking hold of a fortified place resumed their raids on the neighbouring areas.²²⁰ Dhamoni, a town in Sagar, immediately south of Lalitpur, was plundered and Benaika a tahsil headquarter was also attacked.²²¹ Eight thousand Bundelas were reported to be coming upon Malthone

219. Trans. of a representation from the tehseeldar of Khonye (in dist. Sagar) to the Principal Asstt. Commr. Sagar, 8th April 1842; Trans. of a representation from Chokeelall Mohurkar of Police at Khoorya to the Principal Asstt. Commr. Sagar, 9th April 1842. For. Pol. Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, Nos.59-60 (N.A.I.).

220. From S.Fraser, To R.N.C.Hamilton, 14th April 1842; From R.N.C.Hamilton, Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. To Maj. Gen. T.Thackwell, Commdg. Cawnpore, 20th April 1842, For. Pol.Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, No.74 & 82 (N.A.I.).

221. From S.Fraser To R.N.C.Hamilton, 20th July 1842. For. Pol.Progs. 14th June 1843, No.516 (N.A.I.).

in Lalitpur where a detachment of British troops was stationed.²²² Towards the end of June, some of these Rajputs moved south into the countryside where notes were sent through herdsmen and peasants to the heads of villages, for contributions and prohibiting cultivation.²²³

Meanwhile, disturbances spilled over into Hamirpur. On the 31st of May, M.R.Mercer, the cotton planter at Rath wrote, "There is now a party of Robbers in the Bazaar, how many I cannot say, they have stopped up the streets leading into the Bazaar, and are busy clearing the Mahajuns; ... No one has been seen any horses among them".²²⁴ The same evening at about 5 p.m., the attack on the mahajans' houses and shops began. Altogether 203 such affluent houses were plundered out of which, 12 belonged to local shroffs. The entire operation lasted for about six hours.²²⁵ The insurgents after plundering the town intended to attack the tahsildari but finding it strongly entrenched made no attempt on it. They instead fell upon the house of Mercer, the cotton planter. His entire property was either carried away or destroyed and

222. From R.N.Raikes, Commdt. Detachment & Regt. Saugor & Nerbudda, Malthone, 19th June 1842. For. Pol. Progs. 14th June 1843, No.520 (N.A.I.).

223. From M.C.Ommanney, Principal Asstt. Commr. To S. Fraser, Sagar, 28th June 1842. For. Pol. Progs. 14th June 1843, No.527 (N.A.I.).

224. Copies of letters from Mr. Mercer, 31st May 1842. For. Pol. Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, No.156 (N.A.I.).

225. From R.Lowther, To R.N.C.Hamilton, 9th June 1842. For. Pol. Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, No.129 (N.A.I.).

the house set on fire. They searched for the planter determined to kill him but Mercer driven by fear had already taken refuge in the ghari. The rebels then carried away whatever they secured on camels and bullocks that they seized for the purpose, to the Charkhari dominion and encamped there for the night.²²⁶ The following day, they burnt and looted village Kulleywa in Panwari and murdered one of the zamindars. Writing on the 5th June, Taunton, the Collector and Magistrate of Hamirpur, reported "... they (the rebels) have since been ravaging different parts of the District and carrying away contributions from the zamindars chiefly in the pergunna of Punwaree ..." Their headquarters was said to be at Mohobant a large village south west of Panwari.²²⁷ A series of raids on a number of villages and small towns in Panwari followed. Keitah was attacked, its bazar and town plundered and three zamindars carried away as hostages. This instance was duplicated in a number of villages of Panwari as in Khera, Lahora, Dolehra, Panwari, Hutkera, Pearju, Mahewa, Bijrori and Vidwara. The rebels usually arrived at a village early in the morning, negotiated with the zamindars regarding the amount of the ransom and left by ten or eleven carrying away buffaloes and

226. From J.J.Taunton, Magistrate Hamirpur, To R. Lowther, 1st June 1842. For. Pol. Cons. 28th Dec. 1842, Nos. 190-191 (N.A.I.).

227. From J.W.Taunton, To R.Lowther, 5th June 1842. For. Pol. Progs. 3rd Aug. 1842, No.133 (N.A.I.).

bullocks and often the zamindars themselves.²²⁸ The town of Panwari was next attacked. The rebels came upon this place in such large numbers that the Government forces retreated into the treasury.²²⁹ A great part of the town was burnt, a considerable number of houses plundered, the thana destroyed, the military outpost was attacked and all property razed down. Due to the suddenness of the assault, the soldiers were taken unawares. Five barkandazes were killed, two wounded as were the Naib Tahsildar and two Chaprasis. The rebels were eventually driven back, but British forces suffered from a flank fire from houses in the village. Nearly all the surrounding villagers had joined the rebels.²³⁰

About the beginning of June, the two market-towns, Kunch and Kalpi witnessed similar tensions. Here the sudden spread of news that Bundelas were assembling in the neighbourhood, caused a general panic. The fear of an impending attack gripped Kunch and this was transmitted to Kalpi. Merchants and mahajans promptly closed down their shops and houses in both the towns and fled with their belongings across the Jamuna.²³¹

228. Deposition of Rampershad, Zamindar of Keita taken before the Magt. of Humeerpore, 10th June 1842; Deposition of Junarjun Pandit, 10th June 1842; Deposition of Luchman Sing, Zamindar of Vidwara, 5th July 1842, Deposition of Manick, Zamindar of Vidwara, 5th July 1842; Deposition of Rampershad Zamindar of Keita, 10th June 1842, Deposition of Puchoree, Zamindar of Mahewa, 5th July 1842. For. Pol. Cons. 14th June, 1843, No.652 (N.A.I.).

229. From J.J.Taunton, To R.Lowther, Camp. Panwari, 11th June 1842. For.Pol.Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, No.117 (N.A.I.).

230. From W.H.Mitchell, Commdg. Detachment 18th Regt. N.I. To Capt. T.Moore, 8th Regt. Light Cavalry, Commdg. the detachment on service in Bundelkhand, Panwari, 10th June 1842. For. Pol.Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, No.120 (N.A.I.).

231. From G.H.M.Alexander, Offg.Jt.Magt.Calpi To R.Lowther, Commr. 4th June 1842 & From G.H.M.Alexander, To R. Lowther, 5th June 1842; For. Pol. Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, For. Pol. Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, Nos.102 & 104 (N.A.I.).

The uprising gradually petered out in the wake of British realiation. But the widespread resistance took some time to be totally wiped out. Independent principalities and estates like Tehri, Jaitpur, Charkhari, Toreh Fatepur (in Jhansi) and Bijna continued to harbour large contingents of rebel gatherings.

The rebellion in 1842 at one level was an outburst of tensions among the Rajputs - principally Bundela - ubaridars and jagirdars. They faced a kind of crisis in terms of threatened political status and growing economic embarrassment, which the gradual English invasion over their rights brought about. Though left independent, they feared usurption in the future, whose imminence seemed hastened by English take over of the administration of Jalaun and Jhansi.

The leaders implicated in this uprising were Bakht Singh, the Chief of Chirgaon, an estate north of Jhansi on the Betwa, Parichat, the Jagirdar of Jaitpur, in south-western Hamirpur, the Ubaridars of Narhat, Goona and Chandeopur, small principalities situated on the south of Lalitpur. Around September-October 1842, the thakurs of Goona, Narhat, Chandeopur were said to have met and decided upon rising against the British. They sent agents to the Chief of Jaitpur and having secured his consent, Bakht Singh of Chirgaon was sent to Jaitpur while letters were sent to the Chiefs of Panna, Ajairgarh, Chirkhari, Bijawar and Banda. The Chirgaon thakur wrote that he himself "... had been ^Sdepoiled by the British Government of

his estate and that a similar fate awaited all "...".²³² He invited them to proceed to Chirkhari or send confidential agents there, to join him in an agreement. A month later, the Raja of Chirkhari invited all the above Chiefs to his capital for the celebration of Budhva Mangal rites. It was on this occasion, that a solemn pact was entered into with all agreeing to rise up in protest against the Government. They waited for a favourable opportunity ^{till} the end of Phagun (April).²³³ By this time the news of British reverses in Afghanistan in 1842 reached Bundelkhand.²³⁴ Hope spurred them on, and encouraged by the reduced state of British forces in this region, the thakurs launched their rebellion.²³⁵

When the rebellion actually began in April 1842, however, the initiative was taken by Deorao Singh and Pancham Singh of Coonah, Ganeshiji of Narhat, Rao Bakht Singh of Chirgaon and Parichat of Jaitpur. None of the bigger Chiefs had anything to do with them and except for the Rani of Tehri, none even ventured to help them, vouching staunchly instead, their support for the British. Interestingly Parichat of Jaitpur had been

232. Examination of Bhooree Chowbee Chowbee in Letter from the Raja of Chutterpoor to the Agent, 6th Aug. 1842. For. Pol.Cons. 14th June 1843, No.653 (N.A.I.).

233. Ibid.

234. From S.Fraser, To R.N.C.Hamilton, 20th April 1842. For. Pol.Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, No.67 (N.A.I.).

235. From S.Fraser, To R.N.C.Hamilton, 14th April 1842. For. Pol. Cons. 3rd Aug. 1842, No.14 (N.A.I.).

to Jigna and Bilhari so recently subdued, and had tried to induce the Bundelas to join him on promise of pay and booty. But none did.²³⁶ Bakht Singh was reported to have been killed in the encounter at Panwari and Parichat fled to the jungles where he eventually died. His estate was resumed by the Government.

Bakht Bali's jagir in Chirgaon had earlier in 1841 been appropriated by the English Agent. The incumbent had seized some Government horsemen and killed them, in retaliation to which, the Agent attacked his fort, ejected him from it and resumed his territory.²³⁷ The Raja of Jaitpur had his estates recognised by the English in 1812. His property was worth 1,50,000 rupees a year but out of this 70,000 rupees worth of property was held by collateral branches of his family in rent free tenure on condition of military service and the greater part of the rest mortgaged to bankers for debts contracted.²³⁸ All the other estates had their rights formally confirmed by the English.

The rebellion in the British governed districts was confined to Panwari, a pargana contiguous to the Jaitpur State that encircled a number of its villages. Panwari was also the poorest and hardest hit pargana in Hamirpur. Although all the depredations here were ascribed to Bakht Singh and Parichat, their

236. From W.H.Sleeman, Agent. Gov.Gen. in Bundelkhand To Gen. Tombs, 2nd Feb. 1843. For. Pol.Cons. 14th June 1843, No.787 (N.A.I.).

237. Letter from the Raja of Chutterpoor, To the Agent, Lt. Gov. 6th Aug. 1842. For. Pol.Cons. 14th June, 1843, No.653 (N.A.I.).

238. From Maj. W.H.Sleeman, To T.H.Maddock, Secy. to Govt. of India, 11th Aug. 1842. For. Pol.Cons. 14th June 1843, No.549 (N.A.I.).

leadership alone does not explain the selection of Panwari as the only place where tensions were witnessed. The disaffection of the thakurs fused with that of the poverty-stricken villagers of Panwari and both rose to resist the British authority. Cotton experiments were never popular here and after Mercer's establishments were burnt down, the English gave up for ever any project to experiment with cotton cultivation in Bundelkhand.

It was not long after the rebellion was suppressed, that Kuchwahagar joined the Jalaun district in 1844. For little more than a year the Kuchwaha thakurs of this region, had been up in arms against the Mahrathas.²³⁹ In 1842-43, they drove out the Mahratha Amils from Kuchwahagar, reduced Government thanas and occupied the fort at Indurki.²⁴⁰ The English eventually had to sent the Bundelkhand Legion in aid of the Scindia and bring the Kuchwaha thakurs around.²⁴¹

After occupation, experience of rebellion and the pragmatic desire of the English Government not to provoke another resistance demanded a degree of caution in its interactions with these Kuchwaha thakurs. The jagirdars and ghariband thakurs in Bhandere, Indurki and Madhogarh incorporated so recently into the Jalaun district, were therefore, left alone with a considerable amount of their immediate independence. This measure, the

239. From D.Ross, Suptd. of Jalaun To Lt. Col.W.H.Sleeman, 30th Sept. 1844. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.II, File No.22 (U.P.R.A.A.).

240. From D.Ross, To W.H.Sleeman, 1st June 1844. C.O.J. Vol.70, File No.4, Dept.XVIII; Regarding Kuchwahagar and Bhandere. C.O.J. Vol.86, File No.5, 1844-45, Dept.XX (U.P.R.A.A.).

241. From D.Rose, To W.H.Sleeman, 30th Sept. 1844. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.II, File No.22 (N.A.I.).

rulers admitted, was called for "... from motives of policy and prudence, out of consideration to them, and from a wish to uphold their priveleges, so long as such a course is not inconsistent with government".²⁴² Doolan, the Superintendent of Jalaun justified caution,

"... it is highly desirable to provide these class of men (the Ghari-band thakurs) with a decent subsistence, for they are an uninstructed and turbulent race, and if they were suddenly deprived of it, or fancied that their usual means of support were about to fail them from the expected death of the present incumbent, and that the grant being considered only for life would be resumed unless good grounds were shown for the contrary, they would not hesitate ravage a whole district, and inflict countless injury on the peaceable inhabitants, and from their ties of clanship with all the great chiefs, even the meanest of them would raise with ease five to six hundred followers".²⁴³

In deference to their social standing and particularly their traditions of resistance, the English State's intervention was kept well within the bounds of discretion and caution.

One major privelege of the gharibands was, however, invaded upon. In 1844, the Government abolished all petty duties that fifty-seven articles of commerce and consumption had to pay at numerous chowkies and outposts.²⁴⁴ This measure immediately affected the gharibands who drew revenue from such duties on merchandise passing through their estates. They therefore, demanded compensation in the form of an abatement of the fixed quit rent they had to pay to the Government, for the

242. From W.Muir, Secy. to Govt. of the N.W.P. To G.A. Bushby, Agent to the Gov.Gen. Bundelcund, 1st July 1853. C.O.J.Vol.20, File No.44 (U.P.R.A.A.).

243. From Lt. R.Doolan, Suptd. at Jalaun To W.Muir, Settl. Officer in Bundelcund, Orai, 21st Sept. 1842. C.O.J. Vol.II, Dept.I, File No.195 (U.P.R.A.A.).

244. From The Secy. to the Govt. of India, To Lt.Col.W.H. Sleeman, 31st May 1844. C.O.J. Pre-Mutiny Misc. Records, 1843 to 1845, Vol.I, File No.95 (U.P.R.A.A.).

loss they incurred due to the abolition of custom duties.²⁴⁵

Meanwhile, in the newly acquired regions of Kuchwahagar and Chanderi, English land settlements and revenue assessments were applied for the first time in 1844. D. Ross settled land that year in Kuchwahagar²⁴⁶ while three successive triennial settlements were made between 1844 and 1860 respectively by Blake, Harris and Gordon in Chanderi.²⁴⁷ It was much the same story here of decaying agriculture, run-down estates, impoverished zamindars and peasants giving away signs of over-assessment and injudicious application of English notions on Indian agriculture.

2.4.1 Economic Decline

Despite greater familiarity with Bundelkhand and granting substantial revenue abatements in the older districts, the Government could not arrest the process of progressive agrarian decay that set in, in this region in the 1830s. The deterioration extended well in the 1840s and continued in the next decade as well. In fact, increasing distress, severely affecting people at all levels and Government's temporary palliatives took up most of the remaining years of British rule upto 1857-58.

For the English declining agriculture meant a large balance of revenue. In the 1840s, Government tried every means

245. From D. Ross, To W.H. Sleeman, 27th Sept. 1844. C.O.J. Pre-Mutiny Misc. Records, Vol. I, File No. 95 (U.P.R.A.A.).

246. From H. Rose, Coll. of Banda To R. Lowther, Commr. of Rev. for the 4th Div. 15th Dec. 1846. C.O.A. Sl. No. 13, Basta No. 204 (U.P.R.A.A.).

247. Col. J. Davidson, S.R. Lalitpur, 1871.

of collecting revenue, but failed to arrest the increasing balance. The estates were advertised but attracted no farming offers and when they were put up for sale drew no bidders.²⁴⁸

In 1848, due to deficient monsoons in Jhansi and Jalaun, the autumn harvest especially rice and cotton failed totally.²⁴⁹

The zamindar of Biria Buzurg in Jalaun pargana had so long met the Government demand by borrowing from the mahajan. The mahajan now refused to credit money.

In pargana Gurautha, the rate of jama was so high and the severity of drought so great, that zamindars and peasants absconded from a number of villages. Such instances of

impoverishment, were rampant all over the district in practically all the parganas.²⁵⁰

Strained conditions were reflected in the sagging agriculture till revenue defaults and declining production became a vicious circle, one leading to the other. Cotton and 'al', the two principal commercial crops of the season were now little grown. Cultivators sowed just enough grain for their own consumption.²⁵¹

In 1851, the zamindars in a number of villages in Jalaun were so hopelessly improvident and so deeply in debt that they begged to be allowed to sell their estates or portions of them in order to free themselves from the stranglehold of their creditors.²⁵²

248. From J.Thornton, Secy. to the Govt.N.W.P. To H.M. Elloit, Secy. to the Sadar Board of Rev. N.W.P., 12th Aug. 1845 & From H.Rose, To R.Lowther, 15th Dec. 1846. C.O.A. Sl.No.13, Basta No.204 (N.A.I.).

249. From W.H.Sleeman, To Capt. Erskine, Offg. Suptd. of Jalaun, 22nd Nov.1848. C.O.A.Jhansi Records, Vol.IV, File No.65 of 1848 (U.P.R.A.A.).

250. From W.C.Erskine, Suptd. of Jalaun To G.A.Bushby, Agent Gov.Gen. for Bundelcund, 21st May 1849. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.IV, File No.65 (U.P.R.A.A.).

251. From W.C.Erskine, To G.A.Bushby, 7th Aug.1850. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.IV, File No.65 (N.A.I.).

252. From W.C.Erskine, To G.A.Bushby, 28th July 1851. C.O.J. Pre-Mutiny, Misc.Records, 1851 to 1853, Vol.IV, File No.98 (U.P.R.A.A.).

Such decay often led to total ruin of settlements. For instance, at the commencement of the revenue assessment in 1848-49, mouza Kukurnah in Lalitpur sustained a fair amount of cultivation. There were some fifty to sixty houses here whose occupants not only cultivated their own village lands but tilled others in their neighbourhood as well. On visiting Kukurnah in 1851, F.D. Gordon found only about 10 houses still occupied, "... all the others are ruins, the tiles and beams even of which have I believe been sold by the Mustagirs".²⁵³ More than 6,00,000 acres of land were found to have gone waste in Banda in 1855 since the settlement of 1841-42.²⁵⁴

Extreme and progressive distress naturally fell severely on the cultivators. In Kunch, P.J.White found in 1874 a remarkable fall in the status and number of occupant ryots since the last settlement in 1842. Over the whole pargana there were approximately 5,453 maurasi tenants thirty years ago whereas their number decreased by 20 p.c. to 1,103 in the 70s.²⁵⁵ Reporting on the Lalitpur sub-division in 1860, Tyler too stressed the increasing tendency among peasants to take up pahikasht cultivation. Even where they could take up land as khudkasht ryots, they refrained from cultivating in their own village for if they did, they would have had to pay the full value of their produce in rent. They therefore, cultivated just enough to feed their families and took to cultivating

253. Statement of Estates summarily settled in the Dist. of Chunderee by F.D.Gordon, Lullutpore, 13th May 1851. C.O.J. Pre-Mutiny Misc. Records, Vol.V, File No.79 (U.P.R.A.A.).

254. A.B.Patterson, Final Settlement Report of the Karwi Sub-division, Banda District. (Allahabad, 1883), p.21.

255. P.J.White, Gen. Report on the Settl. of Pargana Kunch, Zillah Jalaun, (Allahabad, 1874), para 45. p.13.

land outside their villages as pahikashts, in which case they had to pay 2 to 4 annas less every bigha.²⁵⁶ In 1854-55, the under-tenants of Lalitpur were found remarkably over-assessed. The consequence was that the best tenants went over to the Banpur State which offered estates on far more reasonable terms.²⁵⁷ By 1857, with few exceptions, most of the lambardars and cultivators in Lalitpur were completely at the hands of their village money-lenders.²⁵⁸

To say the least, such developments deeply disturbed the English Government as it looked for immediate balm and permanent cure for the deep seated injury in Bundelkhand. One general remedy that all settlement officers from now on were forced to resort to, was an initial reduction in the revenue demand over the region in their charge. Therefore, when soon after Wright's settlement in Banda, large balance of revenue accrued, H. Rose was appointed in 1846 to correct the state of agriculture in the district. Rose found villages particularly in Augasi, Pailani and Dursenda completely broken down and proposed an overall reduction of demand.²⁵⁹ The jama now fixed was, however, still thought too severe by Edgeworth who succeeded Rose as the Collector of Banda. Edgeworth suggested considerable annual reductions for all the years from 1848-49

256. Col. J. Davidson, S.R. Lullutpore, 1871, para 144.

257. Junior Member's Minute, 15th March 1854. Memorandum on the Dist. of Chundeyree. C.O.J. Vol. 50, File No. 356 (U.P.R.A.A.).

258. Admn. Report of the Chundeyree Dist. in the Rev. Dept. From the Suptd. Chundeyree, 27th May 1857. C.O.J. Vol. 10, File No. 165 (U.P.R.A.A.).

259. From H. Rose, To R. Lowther, 15th Dec. 1846. C.O.A. Sl. No. 13, Bāsta No. 204 (U.P.R.A.A.).

to 1852-53. The reductions were approved and it was stated in the settlement report that farming or sale of lands should be discouraged and every measure taken to allow proprietors retain their lands undisturbed.

W.C.Erskine set out to make fresh settlements for Jalaun in 1849 when he found in most parganas, a heavy jama imposed on declining cultivation and impoverished cultivators. Erskine proposed that a reduction of revenue at the rate of 12 p.c. on those in arrears and that the latter should be allowed two to three years to pay off the balance. He also suggested that villages which the zamindars had deserted should either be sold or given to zamindars.²⁶⁰ A major change that Erskine brought about was in postponing the kists or instalments of revenue payments till the corn was cut so that zamindars would be able to sell their grains to traders instead of having to mortgage it to their bankers and thereby be perpetually in debt.²⁶¹

Reductions in revenue demand had to be resorted to from time to time without relieving the general distress W. Balmain, the Deputy Superintendent of Jalaun found one-sixth of the district lying uncultivated in 1855. The season of 1853-54 due to drought had been disastrous and the hail and blight of 1854-55 had further despoiled the hopes of a good crop. Balmain called for an immediate revision of the jama on reduced rates as

260. From W.C.Erskine, To G.A.Bushby, 21st May 1849. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.IV, File No.65 (U.P.R.A.A.).

261. From W.C.Erskine, To G.A.Bushby, 7th Aug. 1850. C.O.A. Jhansi Records, Vol.IV, File No.65 (U.P.R.A.A.).

he apprehended that by May-June 1856, more villages would be thrown up.²⁶² Large measure of relief was also offered to Banda in 1855 by F.O.Mayne to prevent further depletion of resources and destitution of habitation. Remissions were granted and tuccayi loans were made out but they helped little to arrest the decay.²⁶³ F.D.Gordon, the Deputy Superintendent of Jhansi even proposed that balances for 1853-54 should be recovered only according to the ability of malguzars and such portion as on further investigation was considered irrecoverable, should be excused. The Government decided to extinguish the outstanding claims and abolish the vexatious imposts which pressed heavily on agricultural and commercial enterprise".²⁶⁴

The standard diagnosis found the apparent germ of agricultural decay in escalating Government demands. "I know that large sums lost in having to sow twice the rabi lands", observed Cust, the Collector of Banda in 1852, "I hear on all sides of transfers of properties to meet the Government demand, and the general feeling of the handness of the times ..."²⁶⁵ Mayne who succeeded Cust, reiterated similar misgivings, "The people were made to pay, and they did pay inspite of bad seasons, but ... not without much sacrifice. Much property privately changed hands, and many zamindars were reduced to

262. From W.Balmain, Dy. Suptd. of Jalaun, To the Suptd. at Jhansi, Chanderi, 11th Dec. 1858. C.O.J. Vol.7, File No.120 (U.P.R.A.A.).

263. A.B.Patterson, Final Settlement Report of the Karwi Sub-division, Banda district (Allahabad, 1883), p. 21.

264. From E.A.Reade, Junior Member, Sadar Bd. of Rev., n.d. Sadar Bd. of Rev. Progs. N.W.P. Vol.572, 9th Jan. 1855, No.14 (U.P.S.A.L.).

265. A.B.Patterson, S.R.Karwi, 1883, p. 21.

great poverty by being obliged to pay two or three years revenue or a portion of it, from their private resources". 266

The incidence of revenue by itself was perhaps not as responsible for the oppressive pressure on agriculture as the inflexible methods adopted for collecting the amount and other mutations that went with land settlements. For instance, Rose found in Banda in 1846 that increased jama formed only a small part of the additional burden that the zamindars in the present settlement had to bear. The chowkidari remunerations had been increased, patwaris' pay raised and road funds added. Previously, the zamindars paid the patwaris in land which really did not work out to be more than half ^{the} new money payments. "It will be found that less than a lac of Rupees were added to the taxation of the District and was certainly sufficient to cause embarrassment." 267

What was generally regarded as being injudicious compounding the difficulties of realising dues, was the mistaken policy of abolishing the former practice of bhaiachara land holding and the bhej-burar custom of land distribution in Bundelkhand. In Banda, Rose found that the division of joint estates increased individual burden of payment, causing a great number of coparcenary villages to fall more and more into balance. The defaulters could not pay, the broken down pattis held out no inducement to strangers to buy the property or farm its revenue and the

266. Ibid.

267. From H. Rose, To R. Lowther, 15th Dec. 1846. C.O.A. Sl.No.13, Basta No.204 (U.P.R.A.A.).

and the solvent sharers took no concern in the difficulties of their defaulting brethren. Rose was therefore, forced to transfer pattis once again into joint holdings in 1846 and thereby encourage zamindars to make fresh engagements. ²⁶⁸

Serious doubts were also raised as to the prudence of breaking up estates into separate pattis and thokes in Hamirpur, Kunch and Kalpi as was undertaken by Allen and Muir. In pargana Hamirpur alone, 71 mahals were formed out of what formerly were only 11. Since revenue arrears here did not mount to the extent it did in Panda, the English saw little need to change the measure. ²⁶⁹ In Jalaun, barely two years after British take over, the strain began to show. Ross, the Superintendent observed in 1846, "In some of the Zumeendaree estates in Jalaun the system of sub-division of shares is carried to such an extent, that the profits on those shares to individuals when accounts are cast up at the end of the year, amounts only to a few rupees - but still the Government demand is paid. " Lands being continuously cultivated were left drained and those connected with them turned into a "community of paupers, living from hand to mouth". ²⁷⁰

Summary settlements were made for short terms in the different parganas of Jhansi as and when they came under English

268. Ibid.

269. From C.Allen, Offg. Secy. to the Govt. N.W.P. To A.S. Reid, Offg. Secy. to the S.B.R., 23rd Oct. 1848. C.O.A. Basta No.204, Sl.No.13, File Nos.21-24 (U.P.R.A.A.).

270. From Capt. D.Ross, To W.H.Sleeman, 21st April 1846. C.O.J. Pre-Mutiny Misc. Records, Vol.II, File No.96 (U.P.R.A.A.).

governance. The assessment of jama invariably increased from what the parganas had to pay before. Crucial, however, was what E.G.Jenkinson noted in 1871, (that) "since the introduction of British rule, the constitution of the villages have been in a state of transition." ²⁷¹ The settlements in Jhansi were made with 'mehteys' (headmen) of each village. These mehteys were granted proprietary rights and thereby became representatives or Lambardars to whom was entrusted the management of the village and collection and payment of Government demand. No enquiry was made into the status of other members of the proprietary brotherhood or of the resident cultivators. Kanungoes and patwaris were instead directed to draw up for every village on the basis of a genealogical tree, a record of rights or 'phants' similar to that in practice in the regulation districts. The share of each proprietor and cultivator was to be represented in fraction of a rupee. The people understood little of what was being done as they were seldom referred to, the patwaris and kanungoes being left entirely with the operations. Such delineation of shares was quite contrary to former custom and the constitution of the village. To make matters worse, false entries were made on the basis of incorrect information. The evils of this measure soon surfaced as in Hamirpur and Banda. Shares began to be sold, while lambardars in order to meet their obligations had to borrow heavily or mortgage their property, both of which seriously upset the landholding structure of the proprietary brotherhoods. ²⁷²

271. E.G.Jenkinson, S.R.Jhansi, 1871.

272. Ibid.

A second factor that worked towards ~~dis~~locating agriculture in Jhansi was that as long as the district was ruled by its Raja, large tuccavi advances were given out, seldom less than twenty to twenty-five thousand rupees annually. These advances were sanctioned partially for permanent works and partly to assist the cultivators at the beginning of every agricultural season. After British take over, advances of the latter kind were totally discontinued as mahajans did not wish to credit money on what they considered uncertain security and so did the Government.²⁷³ To make matters worse for the cultivators, the new rulers clamped down on them an inflexible system of assessment and collection of revenue. Formerly the jama was largely related to the actual annual outturn, the ultimate collection being adjusted by the practice of "dekha parkhi". The British now fixed a jama for every village annually that had to be realised by all available means or good reasons shown for not being able to do so. Balances were a discredit both for the Collector and his subordinates. Extortion was therefore, commonly resorted to.²⁷⁴

What appeared to catalyse the process of growing decay in Bundelkhand in the 1850s was a sagging demand for its produce and decline of its trade. Kunch and Kalpi still acted as important trading centres but they became more of entrepots for goods particularly cotton being brought from other regions to be

273. From F.D.Gordon, Dy. Suptd. of Jhansi To Capt.A.Skene, Suptd. at Jhansi, 21st July 1856. C.O.J. Pre-Mutiny, Misc. Records, Vol.II. File No.100 (U.P.R.A.A.).

274. From F.D.Gordon, To Capt. A. Skene, 4th Feb. 1856. C.O.J. Vol.10, File No.170 (U.P.R.A.A.).

carried down the Jamuna to the east, rather than outlets for Bundelkhand's indigenously produced goods.²⁷⁵ The Indian traders who had hitherto congregated in Kunch and Kalpi in large numbers, now lost interest in these towns. In 1855, it was observed, "... Calpee had certainly the appearance of a decayed town and there has been a great diminution in the number of wealthy residents."²⁷⁶ Kalpi in the 1830s supported fifty-two banking houses, thirty years later barely four shops offered hundies.²⁷⁷

In the agrarian production system, a declining trade was reflected in the fall of prices of its output. As early as in 1844, grain was selling so cheap in Chanderi that it could scarcely repay the expenses of cultivation and land rent.²⁷⁸ In 1851, a large outstanding balance of revenue accrued in Jalaun, ascribed chiefly to an unprecedented fall in the price of grain. Cotton cultivation had been a failure for the past some years in this district and now its demand fell so low that it was sold at a meagre price of 8 rupees per maund. The peasants in Jalaun refused to cultivate unless lambardars received payment in kind. This the latter objected as the grain sold at such low rates, that they would not cover the Government revenue.

275. From W.C.Erskine, To G.A.Bushby, 18th April 1853. C.O.J. Vol.70, File No.15 of 1853, Dept.XVII (U.P.R.A.A.).

276. From W.Balmain, Dy. Suptd. of Jalaun To the Suptd. at Jhansi, 14th Nov. 1855. C.O.J. Vol.90, File No.9 of 1855-56, Dept. XXIX (U.P.R.A.A.).

277. P.J.White, S.R.Kunch, 1874, pp. 29-30.

278. Report on the Chunderee dist. From Capt. Blake, Suptd. of Chanderi, 1st June 1844. C.O.J. Vol.86, File No.4 of 1844-45, Dept.XX (U.P.R.A.A.).

Cultivation thus came to a standstill for sometime as both sides remained resolute in their decisions. Finally, the lambardars had to yield and cultivation was resumed but never to the extent it had the year before. The peasants agreed to give away half or two-thirds of their produce to the lambardars. Others cultivated at one rupee per bigha of land for which earlier they were paid 1 rupee 7 annas to 2 rupees annually. Several large estates, however, still remained uncultivated as no one agreed to plough them. Revenue farmers refused to take up engagements so long as peasants declined money pattas. The farmers quite naturally feared that, "... if the people will not plough for their old masters and relatives they will not do so for strangers and interlopers." As for the zamindars, it was beyond their means to take up any fresh ^{land}/for cultivation.²⁷⁹ Such reports of falling cultivation, cheapness of grain, accumulating arrears of revenue came from all the par-ganas in Jalaun. By 1859, revenue balances in Kunch sub-division alone amounted to Rs.38,381.²⁸⁰

Cultivation in Jalaun picked up marginally by 1855 but the money value of land was greatly reduced. The price of produce fell too and consequently so did the rates at which cultivators held land. For the past ten years (1844 to 1855) average prices of grain and cotton had only been two-thirds of what they were a decade earlier and in the absence of flourishing towns or markets, there were little hopes of them going

279. From W.C.Erskine, To G.A.Bushby, 28th July 1851.
C.O.J. Misc. Records, 1851 to 1853, Vol.IV,
File No.98 (U.P.R.A.A.).

280. P.J.White, S.R.Kunch, 1874, p. 67.

up again.²⁸¹

Jhansi too suffered from blight in 1854-55, its produce being affected both in quantity and in the market value. Considerable balances of revenue accumulated which Gordon's coercive measures too could not make good. The kharif output that followed proved disappointing. In the rabi season of 1855-56 therefore, large tracts of land lay fallow, cultivators being unable to plough or sow.²⁸² On the other hand, proprietors who defaulted refused to take up land even on moderate terms.²⁸³

The most dismal indication of the increasing indigent and strained condition of Bundelkhand was found in the growing rate of suicides in this region in the 1840s and 1850s; and the district claiming the highest number of incidents was Hamirpur. Between 1844 and 1854, the total number of 'ascertained' suicides in this district was 257 and 90 more attempts. By comparing these figures with those available for Kanpur, it was found that nearly as many cases were reported in Hamirpur in one year as were in Kanpur in five years. Here again parganas with highest incidents of suicides were Panwari and Rath, poorer compared to the others.²⁸⁴ Women and the cultivating castes were

281. From W. Balmain, Dy. Suptd. of Jalaun To the Suptd. at Jhansi, Chanderi, 11th Dec. 1855. C.O.J. Vol.7, File No.120 (U.P.R.A.A.).

282. From F.D. Gordon, Dy. Suptd. of Jhansi To Capt. A. Skene, Suptd. at Jhansi, 4th Feb. 1856. C.O.J. Vol.10, File No.170 (U.P.R.A.A.).

283. From F.D. Gordon, Suptd. 1856 & 18th Nov. 1856. C.O.J. Vol.62, File No.174 (U.P.R.A.A.).

284. From R. Spankie, Offg. Magt. of Kanpur & late Offg. Magt. of Hamirpur, To W. Muir, Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. 30 Jan. 1855. Selections from the Records of the Govt. of the N.W.P. Vol.III (Agra, 1855), pp. 502-507.

more prone to suicides than others. Suicides became a major issue for discussion among the officials as their number increased in other districts as well, particularly in Banda. One major reason for self-destruction was chronic disease that people often contracted from eating unhygienic food. Among wealthier section, suicides were rare, only those "... reduced by poverty and hunger, and all ills that make life a burden are naturally more prone to it." ²⁸⁵ In the period from 1844 to 1853, there were 245 reported suicides and 90 attempts made in Banda. ²⁸⁶ Suicides in Jalaun were found to be more frequent in 1855 than in Hamirpur, accounting for .0063 per cent of the population. ²⁸⁷

As a corollary to agricultural depression, crimes of all kinds increased, remarkably so in Jhansi and Lalitpur after the unfavourable season of 1855-56. Heading the list of crimes were burglaries and stealing of cattle but highway robberies and cases of kidnapping children were now much greater than were in the two previous years. ²⁸⁸ In Lalitpur, some Rajput ubaridars and jagirdars were held responsible for such crimes. It was alleged that these thakurs indulged the Khangars who in most cases committed the thefts and were tenants on the former's land. Thakurs of Dongra, Kotra and Nanickpur

285. From F.O.Mayne, Coll. & Magt. of Banda, To C.Chester, Commr. 4th Div. Banda, 20th June 1856. Selections from the Records of the Govt. N.W.P. Vol.V. Art III, No.77 of 1856.

286. From Secy. to Govt. N.W.P., To Commr. of Allahabad, Banda, 16th Feb. 1855. Selections from the Records of Govt., N.W.P. Vol.III (Agra, 1855), pp. 512-513.

287. From W.Balmain, Dy. Suptd. of Jalaun, To the Suptd. of Jhansi, Orai, 7th April 1855. Selections from the Records of Govt. N.W.P. Vol.III (Agra 1855) pp.514-516.

288. From Capt. A.Skene, Suptd. at Jhansi, To the Commr. Sagar Div. Jhansi, 6th June 1856. C.O.J. Vol.89, File No.4 of 1855, Dept. XXIX (U.P.R.A.A.).

in south Lalitpur were the prime suspects for harbouring and the sharing profits collected by Khangars.²⁸⁹ But an increase of such crimes pertained to a more widespread phenomenon that certainly went beyond the pale of thakur complicity. As G. Browne, the Deputy Superintendent of Chanderi observed in his report of 9th January 1856, "The year 1854 was marked by a failure of the Rubbee harvest in all parts of the district more or less. This caused great and general distress among the poorer classes, and during the rains they were in very many cases ... driven to commit petty thefts to obtain the means of sustaining life ... Grain was at famine prices and even then scarce".²⁹⁰ In most of the instances brought before the Superintendent of Jhansi in 1856, "... the defendants pleaded guilty urging as their excuse that they and their families had been starving".²⁹¹ In Jalaun as well, in the same year, there was an increase in instances of burglaries although more serious crimes were on the wane.²⁹²

Five decades of British rule had turned Bundelkhand into a poor country. To all official observers henceforth, the people here appeared listless, lacking energy to improve on their 'rough-and-ready' practice of agriculture, that barely produced

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- 289. From Lt.G.Browne, Dy. Suptd. of Chanderi, To Capt. A. Skene, 12th June 1855. C.O.J. Vol.89, File No.5 of 1855, Dept. XXIX (U.P.R.A.A.).
 - 290. From Lt.G.Browne, Dy. Suptd. of Chanderi To Capt. A. Skene, Supdt. at Jhansi, Camp. Talbehath, 9th Jan.1856. C.O.J.Vol.90, File No.7 (U.P.R.A.A.).
 - 291. From F.D.Gordon, Dy. Suptd. Jhansi, To Capt. A.Skene, Suptd. at Jhansi, Camp. Sheragurh, 10th Feb. 1856. C.O.J. Vol.90, File No.9 of 1855-56.Sl.No.1/17(U.P.R.A.A.).
 - 292. From W.Balmain, Vol.90, File No.8 of 1856-57(U.P.R.A.A.). To Capt. A. Skene, Oral, 16th Feb. 1856.

enough for their subsistence. In the States rationale, agricultural backwardness in Bundelkhand, so remarkable in the post mutiny period was largely due to such lack of industry on the part of the peasants.²⁹³ The truth, however, was that the economy had sagged beyond repair denuding thereby the energy, enterprise and incentive of its producers. There was no market, not even access to one. High farming therefore, merely created a glut and further depressed prices.²⁹⁴

From being wholly a commercial concern committed to profits of trade, the English East India Company in course of time emerged as the effective ruler of Bundelkhand. Its interest in this region began with cotton trade and continued in extracting the social surplus. The rationale behind the presence of the English in Bundelkhand remained for quite sometime in maximising the economic benefits of its rule here. In the initial years, much more time, energy and concern were devoted to economic measures than framing any far-seeing political ideology. A uniform economic code, a unified economic system run by an imported machinery was imposed on the society of Bundelkhand whose essence lay in its fractured political structure. It was such a structure that confronted the alien government, a fragmented political order interacting with a unified economic order. The basic incompatibility between the two augured crisis for both. English measures conceived totally out of

293. From J.White, Coll. & Magt. Banda, To the Commr. Allahabad Div. 3rd March 1888. An Inquiry into the Economic conditions of the Agricultural & Labouring classes in the N.W.F. & Oudh. (Nainital, 1888), pp. 121-124.

294. Ibid. From G.E.Ward, Commr. Jhansi Div., To Commr. Div. of Land Records & Agriculture, N.W.P. & Oudh, 2nd June, 1888, pp. 147-160.

context, proved unable to accomodate the existing situation of overlapping political jurisdictions and social rights. The latter on the other hand, stumbled against the linear block that was clamped on them by the alien government. A crisis of lost rights and depleting resources followed, a crisis that people at every level faced. The nature of the crisis differed ^{with} the rank and position of those affected but by enveloping all, it provided the fragmented social order with a unifying factor. The Rajas faced widespread rebellion in the 1830s and unable to meet the growing dissent fell into increasing dependence on the Company. The landed magnates found the staggering revenue demand gradually eroding their power and threatening their very existence. The cultivators were thrown in the midst of an incomprehensible agrarian depression caused by fluctuations in the market prices of their product, shrinking of local markets and the unflinching revenue demand of the State. For all, the English rule and its form of governance seemed the distant but potent catalyst of disruption and instability. Close at hand, however, there appeared some identifiable faces who worked as local agents of the new order. Such men as tahsildars, thanadars, auction-purchasers mahajans, the police and soldiers served to run the new system. Moneylenders and mahajans were no aliens but their increasing stranglehold on the people was certainly unmatched by the latter's experience.

In the wake of the widespread crisis, the East India Company realised that it would no longer be expedient to wield power without responsibility. The machinery that it had set up

to extract surplus was threatening to render the economy of Bundelkhand dry. What was more ominous for the existence of the English was the increasingly audible voice of popular protests. In the decade of 1840s therefore, the English Government was compelled to intervene more directly in the political fabric of Bundelkhand. From their sole concentration on economic measures, the Company had to attend to political consolidation. In their attempts at constructing a cohesive political order, the English were now forced to interact with the inhabitants of Bundelkhand at every level, separately. They could no longer clamp down a framework of laws of their own on everybody in this region. The working of the laws broke down at every level and had to be rearranged according to the needs of each. Much against their wish, the English had to assume the responsibility of taking over the administration of Jhansi and Jalaun temporarily, before annexing both. They had to send troops to coerce the thakurs in Lalitpur and Kuchwahagar up in arms against authority. To permanently conciliate them, the English allowed the thakurs certain prerogatives, even when such allowance did not agree with their own notions of order. Sincere efforts were made to woo back landlords and peasants to their own possessions and to normal cultivation. The ultimate nature of the English political system here in Bundelkhand was conditioned by local exigencies even though the basic ideological content was provided by the foreign rulers. What was particularly at variance with the experiences of the people was the Company's efforts to set up another linear political order would integrate, if not level down all grids of power and fragmented levels of political existence and rearrange them in one standard

pattern. Traditional rights and prerogatives, social status and norms of behaviour were all tailored and altered to suit English notions of order.

For the people, the crisis now spilled over to the political and social realms. Not only was there a growing economic decadence but an impending threat to their traditional moral order. Their beliefs, their mode of actions, sanctioned by tradition and sanctified by rituals, were invaded upon. The distant British State became a tangible and an identifiable conqueror of their erstwhile social and political world. The English laws and regulations that interfered in their daily existence appeared as the most dangerous evil threatening their former order, their world of beliefs and convictions. People now attributed all their crisis to English political intervention.

Popular sentiments towards the British Government were quite often voiced either through overt resistance or involuted protest as the sudden increase in suicides, show. W.H.Sleeman, in his tour in Central India was often surprised to observe the widespread antipathy towards English rule. To the foreign civil servant, the English order appeared so much more organised and disciplined, to the people, it was so disrupting and unfair. Talking of a 'poor, half-naked man, reduced to beggary' by the famine of the 1830s, Sleeman remarked, "He (the man) seemed quite melancholy at the thought of living to see this principality (Tehri), the oldest in Bundelkhand, lose its independence. Even this poor, unclothed, and starving wretch had a feeling of

patriotism, a pride of country, though that country had been so wretchedly governed, and was now desolated by a famine." ²⁹⁵ What Sleeman called patriotism was more than a political allegiance, it was an attachment to a moral order, to the norms and values cherished so long but now under threats of disintegration. Sleeman repeatedly talked of this feeling of nationality that he felt existed in Bundelkhand. To the English mind, this feeling arose from "... the circumstance that the mass of the landholders are of the same class as the chief Bundelas; and that the public establishments of the State are recruited almost exclusively from that mass." ²⁹⁶ But English rule not only shrunk opportunities of employment but disregarded more intangible norms of morality. The blight of 1833-34 had destroyed most of the wheat crop in a good part of Bundelkhand and of Sagar and Narmada division. The people, "attributed this calamity to an increase in the crime of adultery which had followed the introduction of our rule, and which ... was understood to follow it everywhere; that afterwards it was by most people attributed to our frequent measurement of the land, and inspection of fields, with a view to estimate their capabilities to pay; which the people considered a kind of incest, and which he himself, the Deity can never tolerate." ²⁹⁷ People looked upon British rule not only as foreign and alien but as one that desecrated the sanctity of their religion; the new order was sacrilegious, impious. What was contradicting was the

295. W.H.Sleeman, Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official (reprint, karachi, 1973), p. 183.

296. Ibid., p. 185.

297. Ibid., p. 194.

very ideology of governance. The British government was profane and adulterous to the inhabitants of Bundelkhand. Just as the English were decried on grounds of religion and morality, resistance to them was also legitimised as a war for the protection of din (religion).

CHAPTER III.The Sepoy Mutiny and the Movement of
1857 in Bundelkhand.

The multiple streams of politics that converged into the movement of 1857ⁱⁿ/Bundelkhand formed two distinct tiers. Allowing for differences and variations within each tier, a major mark of distinction separated the two. The first comprised of an organised, regulated politics whose network of operations had a much wider geographical confine than the borders of Bundelkhand. In a sense it formed the upper crust of the movement beneath which lay the diverse protests of different sections of people in Bundelkhand. I call the first organised and regulated, not to suggest that the second was unorganised and spontaneous. The difference between the two lay in that the political vision of the former extended beyond a particular territorial limit and beyond a limited regional power structure. Its features did not typify a given area nor did it support any one local powerhead. On the other hand, it tended to absorb different regions into a wide-ranging network of resistance against the British. It is on this ground that it could lay claims to being a more organised movement.

The uprising that we characterise as subscribing to the first tier was fundamentally constituted by the mutiny of the soldiers. The mutiny conceived of a central political focus and it was by trying to recreate that focal centre that it sought to replace British authority. It professed to overthrow the British by appropriating their authority and

legitimacy that were now to be moulded into an alternate centralised political model, supra-local and uninhibited by limits of territoriality. As soldiers broke out into mutiny in the different stations, they displayed a common pattern in their shared political aspirations which they hoped to realise in the course of their actions. They emphasised primarily on resurrecting the erstwhile Mughal capital of Delhi into an alternate centre of power. Negation of British power was formulated in terms of constructing a substitute. Alternate structures of political power were also contrived for different regions but their political motifs were so arranged as to agree with the overall pattern that covered a wider network.

Viewed from above, rebellion at this level was the most obvious facet of the entire movement of 1857-58. Since it was not characteristic of any particular region, it formed a kind of an icing over the fragmented localised protests and levelled them all into a general pattern. It was the movement at this level that the British tried to break first. It was also this apparent even pattern that had been so long the focus of historical attention till more recent detailed micro studies have revealed the multifarious fragments that comprised the whole.

The actions of the soldiers in 1857-58 reflected their experience as^a community, unique in its formation and organisation. The rebellion began with the mutiny of the soldiers in Meerut. In Bundelkhand too, the first uprising was that of the soldiers in Jhansi on the 5th of June 1857. It was in the wake

of a series of mutinies in the different districts and provinces of Northern and Central India that British authority collapsed. The force that the protests of the soldiers was able to muster was to a large extent a reflection of the strength that they derived from their proximity with authority. The army after all was the instrument through which the British rulers wielded power. The strength of the latter ultimately depended on the effective strength of the army and thus the two were thrown into a unique relationship of interdependence. The structure of government and all the varied accessories of the authoritarian state were eventually meaningful as diverse facets of its strength; and the source of this strength was derived from the army. In other words, the army provided the state with its potency as well as translated this power into a visible reality. This relationship brought the two into a close interaction with each other as proximity was one of the important elements in their mutual strength. Thus every district administration was supported by detachments of armed forces and every district town had its cantonment. When this indispensable appendage of authority tried to appropriate for itself the effective power that it had so long provided the latter, the structure of government left with nothing to support itself, collapsed.

3.1 Military establishments in Bundelkhand.

The presence of regular army regiments in Bundelkhand was of relatively recent origins, and till the 1840s, there were none in any of its districts. There were only temporary outposts of detachments in places like Gurowli and Panwari in Hamirpur with a comparatively large cantonment in Keitah

(in the same district) that was wound up by the late 1830s.¹
The major military divisions for this region were stationed in Sagar and Jabalpur.

The first proper military establishment was constituted in Bundelkhand for the protection of the Jalaun State, after it was brought under British control in 1838. Called the Jalaun Legion, it was initially a combined force comprising of two brass field rifles, one six-pounder gun, a regiment of four troopers and another of Infantry with eight Companies. With the temporary acquisition of Jhansi in 1839, two fresh cavalry troopers and 333 Infantry recruits were raised. The force was henceforth denominated the Bundelkhand Legion with headquarters in Jhansi.²

The soldiers of the Legion were principally Muslims, Rajputs, Brahmins and Hindus of lower castes. They were chiefly enlisted from men outside Bundelkhand since those "... belonging to the district having been too accustomed to predatory habits to like discipline, seldom offer as recruits".³
The Legion was stationed chiefly in areas of Bundela stronghold and served the British primarily to combat frequent Bundela uprisings. The expenses of its maintenance were borne by the Jalaun and Jhansi States.⁴

1. C. Allen, S.R. of pergunnahs, Soomerpoor, Moudha, Rath, Punwaree and Khurka, 1842 (Agra, 1846), p. 24.

2. Gen. orders by the Rt. Hon'ble the Gov. Gen. of India in Council, Fort William, 4th April 1844. For. Sec. Progs. 4th May 1844. No.123. (N.A.I.).

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

The Legion was quite frequently assigned service outside Bundelkhand. In March 1844, it was deputed to Gwalior.⁵ In April, it volunteered to go to Sind and its services being accepted, the whole corps was asked to proceed and relieve the already stationed troops.⁶ Meanwhile throughout 1844, the strength of the force in Bundelkhand was being reinforced by fresh recruitments, "... to preserve the internal tranquility of the states, from the efforts of the turbulent and rebellious ..."⁷ Its strength thereafter stood at 640 sowars and 105 commissioned and non-commissioned Indian Officers of different ranks,⁸ 1 Regiment of Artillery and two Infantry battalions consisting of a total of 959 sepoy and 98 officers.⁹ In July 1844, the Artillery was reinforced by the 36 Light Field Battery which was posted at Ambala and six non-commissioned officers were ordered to be transferred from Kanpur to the Legion.¹⁰ Earlier by the General Orders of 4th April, the Bundelkhand Legion was permanently attached to the Bengal Army and its promotion rolls regularised.¹¹

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5. From Agent Gov. Gen. Bundelkhand To F. Currie, Secy. to Govt. of India, 14th March 1844. For. Pol. Progs. 27th April 1844. No.143. (N.A.I.).
 6. To His Excellency the Governor of Sind from Fort William, 4th April 1844, For. Sec. Progs. 27th April 1844, No.119. (N.A.I.).
 7. From the Capt. Commdg. Bundelkhand Legion To Fort William, 1st June 1844 For. Pol. Progs. 16th May 1845, No.337. (N.A.I.).
 8. Ibid.
 9. Gen. Orders by the Rt. Hon'ble the Gov. Gen. of India in Council, Fort William, 4th April 1844, For. Sec. Progs. 4th May 1844. No.123. (N.A.I.).
 10. From the Adjutant Gen. of the Army To the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Mil. Dept. Simla, 24th July 1844. For. Pol. Progs. 10th Aug. 1844, No.180 (N.A.I.).
 11. Extract from the Progs. of the Rt. Hon'ble the Gov. Gen. of India in Council in the Mil. Dept. 26th Oct. 1844. For. Pol. Prog. 1844, No.87 (N.A.I.).

In September 1846 however, W.H.Sleeman complained of the insufficiency of regular forces in Bundelkhand and proposed that proper corps of troops should be stationed for service in the four districts.¹² The proposal was accepted and acted upon. Some Infantry battalions of the Legion were taken into regular military regiments while others were disbanded. The Cavalry was more or less brought up to the same footing as Irregular Cavalry detachments and the Artillery distributed among different Native battalions. The Bundelkhand Legion ceased to exist as a separate branch of service to be replaced by army divisions, the process of gradually dissolving it begun in 1847 and took nearly two years to be completed.¹³

In 1857, Jhansi was the headquarters of the 12th Native Infantry Regiment whose left wing was stationed here while the right wing was posted at Nowgong. Besides the right wing of the 14th Irregular Cavalry and a detachment of foot artillery also resided here. This was the only town in Bundelkhand to house detachments of all the three units of the army-infantry, cavalry and artillery. In other district towns, there would usually be one detachment or a couple of companies of infantry soldiers. Stationed in Lalitpur was the 6th Regiment of the Gwalior Contingent and in Orai were two companies of the 53rd and 56th Native Infantry regiments. Troops garrisoned at

12. From W.H.Sleeman, Jhansi To Fort William, 3rd Sept. 1846, For. Pol. Progs. 17th Oct. 1846, No.54 (N.A.I.).

13. Extract of a Mil. Letter from the Hon'ble the Court of Directors to the Gov. of the Presidency of Fort William in Beng. 10th Feb. 1847. For. Pol. Progs. 31st Dec. 1847, No.164 (N.A.I.); Office Memorandum, Mil. Dept. Camp Lahore, 6th Jan. 1849, For. Pol. Prog. 23rd Jan. 1849, Nos.38-39. (N.A.I.).

Hamirpur formed a detachment of the 56th Native Infantry and those at Banda belonged to the 1st Native Infantry, the headquarters of both the regiments being in Kanpur.

Colloquially referred to as 'Hote Ka Paltan', the 12th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry was raised in 1763 and had served almost the entire length of the country from Carnatic in the South to Sobraon in the North-West.¹⁴ The Cavalry Unit posted at Jhansi was raised as late as in 1846 in Punjab and its left wing too was stationed at Nowgong.¹⁵ The 53rd Regiment whose two companies were at Orai was raised in 1804 and had served in Kabul in 1842 and later in Punjab. Its headquarters in 1857 were at Kanpur.¹⁶ Formerly 2nd Battalion of the 28th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry, the 56th Regiment popularly called 'Lambroon Ka Paltan' was constituted into a separate regiment in 1815. It served primarily in Punjab and in 1857 its main strength stood at Kanpur.¹⁷ Perhaps one of the oldest regiments, the 1st Bengal Native Infantry was formed in 1775 and had a long history of service from Plassey to Punjab.¹⁸

Regiments stationed in all the towns of Bundelkhand therefore had had a fairly mobile career without roots in any one region. The course of their movement instead followed the

14. G.H.D. Gimlette, A Postscript to the Records of the Indian Mutiny. An attempt to trace the subsequent careers and fate of the Royal Bengal Regiments, 1857-58 (London, 1927), p. 99.

15. Ibid, pp. 203-204.

16. Ibid, pp. 168-170.

17. Ibid, pp. 174-175.

18. Ibid, p. 213.

orbit that the political fortunes of the Company took. Beginning with Plassey down to Afghanistan one regiment or the other was a constant witness to the vicissitudes of authority. Infact, their invariable links with Government was the only consistent factor and a permanent one that was the common element shared by different regiments ^{as} a community apart. Their otherwise fissiparous nature was held together only by this single factor of their allegiance to authority. The proximity of the army to the State was more tangible than a mere psychological bond with the rulers that the conditions of service warranted. Every cantonment was situated away from the town. The actual town of Jhansi for instance, was about a mile from the station where the soldiers were cantoned, close to the civil lines housing the British officers of all ranks and service:¹⁹ and this was true of every other town.

Conditions of work and living insulated the soldiers from their rural past while reducing the territorial distance of one regiment from another. Assuredly, the soldiers did not forgo their social beliefs and behaviour. but the altered situation and its day-to-day requirements levelled down all in relation to one another and more decisively in relation to authority. Service in the army was almost a way of life. The day began with the music of revelie and closed with the

19. Reports from Stations in India and its dependencies occupied by British and by Native Troops, Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army, Vol.II, Appendix, Jhansi (Calcutta, 1863), pp. 273-277.

beating of retreat, while the last post late at night, played the concluding notes. Parades in the morning and evening ordered by the sound of kettle drums were the un-failing daily ritual of the cantonments. All soldiers marched in one uniform wearing similar accoutrements varying with respective ranks to the call of their commanding officers. They slept in barracks, their 6 ft. x 2 ft. cots, the only marks of individual identity.²⁰

The only link that soldiers had with the local Indian population outside their regimental world, was through the bazaars that grew along side the cantonments. Bazaars not only meant shops but also a fair amount of townsmen directly or indirectly associated with exchange. Such bazaars were inclined to expand both in activity and in the numbers of floating and resident population.²¹ They were also the centres of emission and transmission of news, authentic or exaggerated, between the soldiers and the civilians.

The needs of the State for order and discipline in its military force clamped on the soldiers a uniformity of shared experience and demanded unflinching loyalty to the power structure. The individual was sub-sumed in the collective that decided the perception and fidelity of the soldiers, as a community, a congregation. The loyalty of the Indian soldier

20. Ibid.

21. Suggestions In regard to Sanitary Works Required for Improving Indian Stations. 1864, p. 32.

to the Government was almost assumed. Willaim Kaye's characterisation of the soldier's predominant sentiment being '... fidelity to his salt, or in other words, to the hands that fed him' ²² would have found agreement among all English Officers. Several commanders like Lake observed '... the good conduct firmness and steady attachment of our native troops ...' ²³ 'Attachment', 'Loyalty', 'fidelity', 'devotion' were words used repeatedly to describe the Indian soldiers as subscribing to the flock whose faithfulness to the master was applauded if only to place fresh demands on it. In 1849, the editor of 'The Moffussilite' wrote about the Bengal Native Infantry, "they undoubtedly possess many of the best qualities of soldiers, they are for most part fond of and devoted to the services; they are patient, cheerful and obedient." ²⁴

Scarcely seven years later, the patience of the Indian soldiers soured, his obedience inverted to uncompromising protest and dogged resistance. Sita Ram, himself an Infantry soldiers, observed after the capture of Bharatpur in 1825, "All kinds of news, both true and false, are discussed in the bazaars of large military stations, and anything injurious to the fortune of the Government is listened to with keenest interest".²⁵ Was the mutiny in 1857 an

22. John Kaye, History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58 ed. by Col. Malleon (Connecticut, 1971), Vol. I, p. 149.

23. Amiya Barat, The Bengal Native Infantry, its organization and discipline, 1796-1852 (Calcutta, 1962), p. 193.

24. Ibid, p. 291.

25. James Lunt (ed), From Sepoy to Subedar, being the Life and Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram a Native Officer of the Bengal Army written and related by himself. Trans. by Lt. Col. Norgate (Lahore, 1873), p. 43.

overnight reversal, an inversion of loyalty? or was it as most historians of the event take pains to prove, a culmination of a growing tension in the army against the State? or was dissent internal to the phenomenon of fidelity forcibly extracted by the demands of service? The dormant in-compliance beneath active obedience to orders surfaced into expressed protest at a time when the command no longer seemed potent enough to enforce submission. Collective loyalty was pushed back by the collective consciousness of power and domination, of the incompatibility between the white officer and the brown subaltern.

The history of the British army in India from its inception was anything but a linear story of domination and unequivocal compliance working a perfect, undisturbed alliance. Nineteenth century opened with instances of soldier's mutiny which became particularly frequent after 1824.²⁶ Yet very little literature exist if any on the experiences of an Indian soldiers working under conditions of British rule. It is only when he stood up in resistance that authors found reasons to explain his altered affection by way of an enumeration of the possible grievances. The soldier had many reasons to complain as both Kaye and Barat have so well catalogued.²⁷ His salary of seven rupees a month which remained unchanged till 1857 was a paltry sum

26. Barat, op.cit., p.304. It has a long chapter on the mutinies of the Bengal army before 1857-58, pp. 187-290.

27. Kaye, pp. 184-200 (op.cit.),
Barat, op.cit., pp. 291-306.

that made subsistence difficult in a period of price increases. With the increasing curtailment of batta, the extra field allowance and restricted prospects of promotion, the service had little to commend itself to the Indian soldier. It was rendered all the more odious when the army was driven to hazardous campaigns in Burma and Afghanistan in order to pamper the imperialist zeal of the British masters. The physical discomfort coupled with the persistent apprehension of social ostracism at having to cross the Indus or the sea in the east was certainly distressing for the Indian subaltern. A staunch loyalist like Sitaram too found genuine reasons to complain against the Government's thoughtless measures. "Now I understand," he wrote, "why it was forbidden to cross the Indus. The fate of those who do so is truly bad, and our misfortunes were increased by the knowledge that we had done that which is forbidden by our religion." ²⁸ Both Kaye and Barat have at length dwelt upon the growing distance between the soldiers and their commanders caused primarily by the latter's intemperance and disdain towards their Indian subordinates. The reasons for the soldier's increasing disaffection and distrust were many as service in the army lost much of its attractions. Any length of their narration and analysis, however, does not clarify our understanding of the mutiny in 1857.

More important for the uprising was the alienation of the soldier from his white commander, the 'alarm and disquiet' as Kaye puts it, that made him 'most susceptible to

28. Lunt, op.cit., p. 91.

deleterious impressions'.²⁹ Were such impressions indices of the soldier's grievances or were they potent factors of mobilisation at a moment when the State began to be perceived as standing on the precipice of a catastrophe? Here Sitaram's account is certainly more instructive. 'The principal cause of the rebellion was the feeling of power that the Sepoys had and the little control the sahibs were allowed to exert over them.'³⁰ It was the belief that power has changed hands that acted as the crucial catalyst. The resentment over English occupation of Awadh or the paranoia over the greased cartridges acted as agents for legitimising the final act of defiance. The widely disseminated rumours that all English soldiers had been exterminated in the Crimean War and that the Russians were now leading a huge contingent of force to invade/destroyed what remained of the State's credibility. This was the time when even those who never faltered in their fidelity to authority like Sitaram began to have misgivings

"I had never known the Sirkar to interfere with our religion or our caste in all the year since I had been a soldier, but I was nevertheless filled with doubt. I remembered the treatment of many regiments with regard to field allowance - how it had first been promised and then withheld. I could not forget that the Sirkar had seized Oudh without due cause..

I had also remarked the increase of Padre Sahibs during recent years, who stood up in the streets of our cities and told the people that their cherished religion was all false, and who exhorted them to become Christians ... but how could they have acted like this without the Government's sanction?"³¹

29. Kaye, op.cit., p. 157.

30. Lunt, op.cit., p. 174.

31. Ibid, pp. 165-166.

The lurking fear, the vague premonitions assumed concrete substance as valid cause for alarm and disquiet. The justification for rebellion was laid out and the precedence of Meerut outlined the course of action taken up by so many regiments all over northern and central India. Once again, such fears, such depletion of faith in the Government, such belief that authority would pass from English hands, was a reflection of the collective mind, talking, believing, hoping and fearing.

To summarise, the very existence of the soldiers as members of a single group held together by the exigencies of State and rituals dictated by it, made for the uniqueness and distinction of their actions in 1857-58. On one hand, the proximity and close interdependence of the army and authority largely explained the organised pattern of politics that the mutiny evinced. The political vision of the soldiers determined by their experience as a united force drew a nexus of political structure that competed with the centralised British Government. They perceived the State not in fragments but as a whole and in rebellion they tried to create another whole. On the other hand, the army as a large community strode over territorial and local boundaries. It was with remarkable rapidity that rebellion permeated regiments as widely distanced as Meerut and Dinapur; and it was also with remarkable consonance that all soldiers conformed to identical patterns of action in protest. The character of their actions, the manner of rapid spread of mutiny and the positively conceived vision about an alternate order distinguish the mutiny of the soldiers from the

rebellion of the civilians.

3.2 How it all began ...

The mutinies in all the stations of Bundelkhand conformed to an ordered pattern of actions that had distinct phases of development. The first was the call for action, mobilising all the soldiers together either by raising a false alarm as in Jhansi or reversing roles when ordered by the English to get together. Once soldiers gathered, it was time for expressed rebellion, the actions again following a sequential order. The primary aim was to exterminate the State either by physically driving the English officials out or actually killing them. Once the English were taken care of, all those associated with them, the Christian preachers, the Bengali/babus or loyal soldiers were singled out and treated according to the degree of hatred each provoked and their perceived potentiality for endangering rebellion. Therefore, Christians preachers were invariably put to death but the Bengali spared, though all his property was destroyed. Large scale, organised annihilation and negation of all symbols of the British State was the first steps towards constructing an alternative. Thus, prisoners were released, English records, official buildings, private houses, all other property were completely destroyed. Power appropriated, accompanying actions tried building up a new structure of authority on the ruins of the old. To legitimise this authority, the soldiers sought sanction from their headquarters in Delhi and hence their

growing inclination towards moving out of town and proceeding to Delhi, disseminating the spirit of resistance and bringing to collapse British rule in stations on their way.

It was the way soldiers were organised into different regiments that formed the basis of most actions. Military arrangements were transformed into political organisations at moments of rebellion. Soldiers kept together their regimental formation as long as they could. One of the three units of the army—infantry, artillery or cavalry took the initiative while the others followed but as separate individual regiments retaining their hierarchy of ranks. Again, outbreak in the headquarters of regiments caused splintered battalions stationed in different towns to rise in response. Insurgency was transmitted from one regiment to another, from the headquarters to the sub-areas. After the mutiny in Jhansi those in Nowgong and Kurrera followed, while regiments in Hamirpur and Banda awaited their corps to rise in Kanpur.

3.2.1 Jhansi.

On the 5th of June, a day after the mutiny in Kanpur, at about 3 p.m. in the afternoon, some soldiers of the 12th Native Infantry raised an alarm that the magazine had been attacked by dacoits and rushed to the Star Fort that contained the magazine and the entire treasure amounting to about 47 lakhs of rupees. A large number of soldiers, responding to the alarm went to the Fort and seized it. By evening, many returned to their lines but fifty men with two guns remained behind in possession of the Fort. The Infantry soldiers were

joined by those of the Artillery.³² The Adjutant of the 14th Bengal Irregular Cavalry went to the soldiers' lines immediately after the outbreak, ordered them to get ready and marched with them towards the Magazine. They found one of the guns mounted on the rampart of the Star Fort, a second on the Gate with all the soldiers ready to resist. On the cavalry approaching the Magazine, a musket was fired on them, following which the regiment stop-ped and was ordered back to the lines.³³ Two English Officers, Dunlop (Capt.) and Lt. Taylor went to the Magazine to talk to the soldiers when they were fired upon and were forced to flee. The soldiers later also fired on Capt. Skens the Superintendent, when he was having a petition read. Thereafter, all the English officials and their families took shelter in the Jhansi fort except Capt. Dunlop and Lt. Taylor who remained behind in the cantonment.³⁴ The following morning on the 6th of June, the Cavalry regiment was once again formed and marched to the Magazine around which pickets were placed. At about 8 a.m., the pickets were recalled and the Cavalry posted on the road near the Infantry lines. Around 12th in the afternoon, heavy musketry was heard in the Infantry lines. The Cavalry soldiers learnt that one officer

32. From R. Hamilton, Agent Gov. Gen. for Central India to G.F. Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India with the G.V. Gen., Camp Jhansi, 24th April, 1858. For Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Nos. 280-88 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 14-20.

33. Deposition of Peer Zuhoor Ali of the 14th Irregular Cavalry taken on the 4th March 1859. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Part II, No. 313 (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 46-48.

34. Deposition of Sheikh Hingun Hookaburdar to Capt. F. D. Gordon, Dy. Commr. of Jhansi, 6th March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No. 286. (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 29-34.

and two clerks had been killed and rest of the officers had taken flight. Hearing this, the Cavalry broke into rebellion and attacked their Adjutant, Lt. Campbell. He was wounded by a musket ball but was able to flee into the fort.³⁵ The two officers who could not escape were Capt. Dunlop and Lt. Taylor, both of whom were killed. Two Havildars and One Sepoy were also shot dead because they were accompanying Lt. Taylor, an English Officer.³⁶

Thus by the afternoon of the 6th, the entire station and all the soldiers of Jhansi were up in mutiny against the British. All of them joined the soldiers in the Magazine.³⁷ They then to split into smaller groups.³⁸ The sowars went to the Jail and released the prisoners. The Jail Darogha, Bakshish Ali and the burkandazes joined them.³⁹ Others set fire to the officers' bungalows. The police and the newly raised match-lockmen all deserted their officers and joined the soldiers.⁴⁰ The same afternoon, a group of fifty sowars, 300 soldiers, a number of Customs and Police chapasies led

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35. Deposition of Peer Zuhoor Ali taken on the 4th March 1859. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1858, Part II. No.313 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 46-48.
 36. R. Hamilton to G.F.Edmonstone, Jhansi, 24th April, 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1858. Nos.280-288 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 14-20.
 37. Deposition of Sheikh Hingun 6th March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1858, Suppl. No.286 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 29-34.
 38. G.W.Forrest, Selections from the State Papers, Vol.IV, Appendix A. pp. V-VIII. (Calcutta 1912) Written Deposition of a native of Bengal. F.S.U.P., pp. 42-46.
 39. Deposition of Sheikh Hingun, 6th March 1859. For.Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.286 (N.A.I.), F.S.U.P., pp. 29-34.
 40. From W.C.Erskine, Commr. & Agent Lt. Gov.Sagar Dvn. To G.F.Edmonstone, Jabalpur, 22nd June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 31st July 1857, No.329.(N.A.I.).

by the Darogha went up to the town with two guns. The doors of the Orcha gate that led to the town were thrown open to the cry of 'Deen Ka Jai' (Victory of Religion). The men proceeded to Rani Laxmi Bai's palace and demanded assistance from her. All her guards joined the rebel force.⁴¹ At about 3 p.m. the same day, the soldiers and the cavalymen made their first attack on the English, beseiged in the fort.⁴² Not being able to make a breach, the soldiers returned to their lines, placing some sowars and chaprasies of the custom and police departments on guard over the gates.

The next morning, three Englishmen, Andrews, Purcell and Scot, disguised as Indians came out of the fort in order to go to the Rani for help. They were recognised captured and killed. Soon after, a general plunder and looting of property of the Europeans and some of their Indian officials began.⁴³ With the exception of the large Agency building, all the houses and offices were burnt down. The office records were taken out and made a bonfire of, in the open field. Some of the soldiers and released prisoners drove about in buggies and carriages all over the cantonment, appropriating the symbols

41. Forrest, Selections from the State Papers, op.cit.
Written Deposition of a native of Bengal. F.S.U.P.,
pp. 42-46.

42. Deposition of Sheikh Hingun, 6th March 1858. For. Pol.
Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.286 (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P.,
pp. 29-34.

43. Forrest, Selections from the State Papers, op.cit.
Written Deposition of a native of Bengal. F.S.U.P.,
pp. 42-46.

of authority.⁴⁴ "The Bengalees were specially singled out for vengeance",... deposed a Bengali official later, "The following morning a general search was made for Bengalees, and myself and two others of the customs establishment fell into the hands of the ruffians and were hauled up in presence of the risaladar who ordered us to be kept in confinement until the fort should surrender".⁴⁵

On the 8th morning, the soldiers having secured two guns from the Rani began fresh attacks on the fort. Capt. Gordon was shot in the head and died. The others in the fort decided to surrender on condition that their lives would be spared. The soldiers pledged not to kill them and around 5 in the evening, the English came out of the fort. As soon as they did so, they were bound and taken to Jhokun Bag, where all of them were put to sword.⁴⁶ Bakshish Ali, later reported to the Risaladar with some pride and satisfaction, at having been able to kill the "Burra(Bara) Sahib" (Capt. Skene, the Superintendent of Jhansi) with one stroke.⁴⁷

Three or four days after the English were killed, the soldiers left Jhansi for Delhi, taking with them the treasure and as much as they could of property and horses belonging to

44. From S. Thornton, Dy. Coll. To Maj. W.C. Erskine, Commr. Samthar, 21st Aug. 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 30th Oct. 1857, Nos. 602-603. (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 8-14.

45. Forrest, Selections from the State Papers, op.cit. Written Deposition of a native of Bengal, F.S.U.P., pp. 42-46.

46. Deposition of Sheikh Hingun, 6th March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No. 286 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 29-34.

47. R. Hamilton to G.F. Edmonstone, Jhansi, 24th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859. Nos. 280-288. (N.A.I.), F.S.U.P., pp. 14-20.

the officers.⁴⁸ Bakshish Ali accompanied them but after sometime returned to Jhansi.⁴⁹ According to one deposition, the soldiers had asked Laxmi Bai for 125,000 Rupees as a price for the throne. The Rani agreed and gave them Rs.15,000, but before the rest was paid, they left for Delhi.⁵⁰ Through mutiny, the soldiers had assumed authority in place of the overthrown English rulers. It was now their turn to delegate the same and here they stood over Laxmi Bai.

The 12th Bengal Native Infantry regiment had come to Jhansi from Multan, five years ago. Most of the soldiers came from the North, as the few soldiers who were indentified show. According to Aman Khan, a soldier of the 8th Company of the Regiment, four men were principally responsible for beginning the mutiny in Jhansi. They were Debi Singh of Banoda in Lucknow, Naurang Singh of Baiswara also in the Lucknow Division, Jai Singh of Bhojpur in Eastern U.P. and Jaidin Singh of Monghyr in Bihar. Aman Khan himself, was a resident of Etmadpur near Agra.⁵¹ The 14th Irregular Cavalry being raised

48. Abstract trans. of the Statement of Aman Khan, of the 8th Co. 12th Regl. Beng. No.I. 14th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859. Suppl. No.283 (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 24-27.

49. Trans. of the Statement of Bhagwan Brahmin, son of Bakhta, aged 29, Resident of Kanpur District. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859. Suppl. No.284 (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., p. 28.

50. Trans. of the Deposition of Jamadar of Orderlies, Madar Bakhsh attached to Capt. Gordon of Jhansi, 23rd March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.287 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 35-39.

51. Abstract Trans. of the Statement of Aman Khan, 14th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859. Suppl. No.283 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 24-27.

in the North most of the officers and men were inhabitants of Delhi or its vicinity.⁵² Kala Khan, a Risaladar of the Regiment was their leader in mutiny, on whose orders the English were buried and who later led the mutineers to Delhi.⁵³

Apart from the resident regiments in Jhansi, a fairly large contingent of soldiers had come to the town on the eve of the uprising. Aman Khan estimated the number to be around five hundred "... some were dressed in red, others in black and some in yellow".⁵⁴ There were five or six Risaladars of cavalry regiments present with the troops in Jhansi, but interestingly Aman Khan notes the absence of any Subahdar-major of the infantry. Nor were there any Subahdars or Jamadars in Jhansi at the time of the mutiny. Lal Bahadur was the only Subahdar present and he tried hard to desist the soldiers from mutinying but "... no one would listen to him".⁵⁵

A letter was brought to Jhansi from Delhi, the contents of which ran to the effect that the entire armed forces of the Bengal Presidency had mutinied. Since the Regiment in

52. From G. Browne To Commr. Sagar Dvn. Agra, 11th Sept. 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch, 6th Nov. 1857. No.18. (N.A.I.).

53. Ibid, Abstract trans. of the statement of Aman Khan, 14th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859. Suppl. No.283 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 24-27.

54. Abstract Trans. of the statement of Aman Khan, 14th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.283, (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., pp. 24-27.

55. Ibid.

Jhansi had not done so for so long, the soldiers would be regarded as outcasts and as having lost their faith, it said. Receiving this letter, Devi Singh, Naurang Singh, Jai Singh and Jaidin Singh contrived to act. They prevailed upon the other soldiers to rise and give effect to their resolution. The false alarm was raised soon after⁵⁶ by fifty-two men of the Infantry. They invited all men of the 'deen' to flock to their standard, offering to remunerate each man for his services at the rate of twelve rupees per month.⁵⁷ In the widespread upsurge that followed, not only did all the soldiers join, but most of the civilian officials participated too. Nazim Hussain, the revenue tahsildar and Ahmed Hussain, the tahsildar of Jhansi were imprisoned.⁵⁸ The rest voluntarily supported the mutineers. Among the soldiers, Lal Bahadur Subahdar and Kala Khan Risaladar took most of the major decisions, while Bakshish Ali, the Jail Darogha, Muhammed Bux, the Jamadar of Jail and Mana Sahib, Laxmi Bai's father were among the more influential civilians.

This was perhaps a perfect specimen of soldiers organising for rebellion. A verbal message from Delhi served the dual functions of informing and mobilising at the same time.⁵⁹

56. Ibid.

57. Forrest, Selections from the State Papers, op.cit. Written Deposition of a native of Bengal. F.S.U.P., pp. 42-46.

58. Abstract trans. of the Statement of Sahibood-deen Khansamah of Maj. Skene, 23rd March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.282 (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 20-24.

59. Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India (Delhi, 1983), p. 227.

Once some men were convinced of their righteousness to act, it was their turn to communicate to others, the most potent rallying cry being an appeal to religion. After the British were expelled the soldiers fell back into their pre-existing order and hierarchy. Subahdar Lal Bahadur who had tried to dissuade the subalterns from revolting now took up command in agreement with his higher rank together with Risaladar Kala Khan leading the cavalry soldiers.

On the 10th of June, the right wing of the 12th Bengal Regiment Native Infantry and the left wing of the 14th Irregular Cavalry at Nowgong, south-east of Jhansi⁶⁰ mutinied. They left their station and marched away towards Kanpur. On their way they passed the towns Gurotha and Erich in Jhansi and Gurserai in Jalaun. Erich was heard as having been plundered by them.⁶¹

Mutiny passed on the spirit of opposition and resistance to British particularly to the non-military officials. During the outbreaks at Jhansi and Nowgong, S. Thornton, the Deputy Collector of Jhansi was in Mau. Learning that a detachment of the 14th Irregular cavalry had encamped somewhere 8 miles from Mau, Thornton with others went to Gurotha via Gurserai. In Gurotha, the officials tried to raise a body of men from among the local Bundelas for their

60. Deposition of Sewak Singh Kshatriya Kanbura, Sipahi of Paltan Hewett, Regiment 12. Lucknow Collectorate Mutiny Basta (UPSAL) F.S.U.P., p. 4.

61. From S. Thornton, Dy. Coll. To Maj. W.C.Erskine, Commr. Samthar, 21st Aug. 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 30th Oct. 1857, Nos. 602-603. (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 8-14.

own protection. They however failed because the police and tahsil chaprasies declined to assist them. The latter even refused to give out any money from the treasury without the orders of the Emperor in Delhi from whom they said they had received a Shuka (sealed letter).⁶² The initiative invariably came from the lowest ranked chaprasies, paiks of either police, revenue or custom departments.

Thirty-two miles from Jhansi, a detachment of the 12th Native Infantry was stationed at Kurrera. Following the outbreak at Jhansi, this unit mutinied in the first week of June and all the soldiers left the station for Jhansi.⁶³ The solidarity of a regiment was reflected in defiance.

3.2.2 Lalitpur.

The uprising in Jhansi spread fear and a general panic among the district officials in the surrounding areas of Bundelkhand. In Lalitpur, the sub-division immediately south of Jhansi, A.C.Gordon, the deputy Commissioner expressed ^{his} alarm in a series of letters. The thakurs had taken to arms and were assembling in large bodies around Lalitpur. The revenue officials and police had deserted the station. The only hope the officials still had, was on the soldiers of the 6th Regiment of the Gwalior Contingent, stationed there. A false alarm had been raised on the afternoon of 11th June that the Bundelas were looting the bazar and the soldiers displayed great alacrity in coming

62. Ibid.

63. From Col. Durand To Brig. Ramsay, Gwalior, Indore, 8th June 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 26th June 1857, No.92 (N.A.I.).

to British assistance. The treasure was removed to the sepoy lines being regarded the safest, against any sudden night attack. The next day, i.e. 12th, the officials, however, decided to evacuate the station, unable to keep their control over the sub-division and apprehending their own lines. It was resolved that they would march with the regiment of troops to Esagarh in the west, enroute to Gwalior. The Indian officers were told of the decision and after paying all the Government servants, the remaining treasure in the station was distributed among the soldiers to induce them to abandon everything but their ammunition and accompany the English. As preparations for departure were being made in the evening, the officials were informed that there was great excitement in the lines and that the soldiers refused to march. On going to the soldiers quarters, the English officers found two bodies of men collected. Once again as in Jhansi, there were no Indian officers present among them. On enquiring, the soldiers pretended that want of carriage prevented them from moving. The officers promised them carriage and pleaded with every inducement that their fallen state permitted to prevail upon the soldiers to march. But the latter instead openly declared mutiny. When told of the money that had been distributed, the soldiers replied that they considered it a gift from the King. They also said, "we are servant of the King of Delhie, not a man of us will go with you, however we wont take your lives, but you must be off". The English fled from the station.⁶⁴ Political loyalty

64. From Lt. A.C.Gordon, Dy. Commr. 2nd Class Chanderi To Maj. Erskine, Commr. Sagar Dvn. Sagar, 17th Sept. 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.237 (N.A.I.).

was switched to the alternate order that the soldiers acted to set up.

The soldiers seized the Magazine and treasury and left Lalitpur on the 13th evening and marched towards Jhansi.⁶⁵ They were attacked as soon as they turned their backs on Lalitpur by Mardan Singh's followers and other Bundelas. The attacks continued till the soldiers finally crossed the river Betwa into the Jhansi territory. They were in Jhansi for three days before proceeding further north towards Orai, ultimately to reach Kalpi and Kanpur.⁶⁶

3.2.3 Orai.

Orai, the district headquarters of Jalaun, fell on the way to the north, beyond Jamuna, from all the stations in Bundelkhand. It was the mutinies of the neighbouring districts and the advent of soldiers from outside that crippled the administration and compelled the English to evacuate the station. The first to rise in Orai were not the soldiers of the two companies of 53rd and 56th Native Infantries that were stationed here but the chaprasies of the customs department. Soon after news of the mutiny in Jhansi reached Orai, the chaprasies burnt the customs lodge, chowkis and threatened to kill their officers. The police followed suit. Unable to hold on the district any longer, the English officials decided

65. From W.C.Erskine, Commr. Sagar Dvn. To G.F.Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India with the Gov.Gen. Jabalpur, 23rd June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 31st July 1857, No. 330 (N.A.I.).

66. The Revolt in Central India, 1857-59. Compiled in the Intelligence Branch Dvn. of the Chief of the Staff, Army Headquarters, India. (Simla 1908) pp. 22-25. F.S.U.P., pp. 108-113.

to abandon the station and seek safety elsewhere.⁶⁷

Lt. Browne, the Deputy Commissioner and Lt. Lamb left Orai on the 11th of June.⁶⁸ Three or four days later, the soldiers from Jhansi arrived.⁶⁹ Passanah and Griffiths, the Deputy Collectors who had stayed behind left thereafter on the 15th night.⁷⁰ The Jhansi troops released prisoners from the Jail, plundered the Government treasure and the property left behind by the English and the Christian inhabitants and burnt down and destroyed the records and all public and private buildings. Of the fleeing English, three fell into the hands of the 12th Native Infantry; all of them were killed. The soldiers remained in Orai for one day only. A week later, soldiers from Nowgong came and plundered a few of the revenue establishments and the treasury. A company of the 53th Native Infantry belonging to Orai, which had been sent with the treasure to Jalaun mutinied and captured Passanah and Griffiths, while they were escaping and brought them back to Orai. Forcing the two English officials to pay a heavy ransom, they let them go. Passanah and Griffiths were next seized by the servants of the Chief of Gurserai and taken to the soldiers from Lalitpur who arrived at Orai on the 21st of June.⁷¹ All the

67. Further Papers (No.7) relative to The Mutinies in the East Indies. Inclosure 34 in No.8. pp. 155-156.

68. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the restoration of authority in the district of Jalaun in 1857-58. No.41 of 1858. From G.Passanah, Dy. Coll. of Jalaun To Capt. A.H.Ternan, Dy. Commr. of Jalaun, Calpee, 29th May, 1858, para 2, p. 498.

69. Statements of Makhan Kumar & Bisasu Lakshman, servants of Lt. Browne, who left Orai on or about 1st Sept. 1857, Agra, 9th Sept. 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch, 6th Nov. 1857, No.18 (N.A.I.).

70. N.E., Jalaun, para 2, p. 498.

71. Ibid, Statements of Makhan Kumar & Bisasu Lakshman, Agra, 9th Sept. 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch, 6th Nov. 1857, No.18 (N.A.I.).

soldiers took off towards Kanpur.⁷²

As for the Indian civilian officials, the tahsildars and the thanadars did not display an outright hostility to the English though many took service with the Chief of Gurserai and Tai Bai, the erstwhile Rani of Jalaun. It was the barkandazes, the chapra-sies and the guards who took to rebellion, joined the mutineers in plundering the town and generally entered the service of Kesho Rao. The barkandazes of Atta in the Kalpi tahsil and Bangra in Kunch were later reported to have behaved violently in demanding their pay from the tahsildar.⁷³ There were some seventy or eighty barkandazes of the Bagri tribe employed in the district. Now in 1857 they went off in a body and took to plunder.⁷⁴

Orai was the only exception in that the locally stationed soldiers did not rise to overturn the British rule. Instead mutineers from the other stations passing the town on their way up north brought the administration to a total collapse. Hamirpur and Banda, however, followed the general pattern of mutinies leading to the overthrow of English officials.

3.2.4 Hamirpur.

The soldiers posted in Hamirpur belonged to a detachment of the 56th Native Infantry whose headquarters were in Kanpur. Since the mutiny in Kanpur on the 4th of June

72. From W.C.Erskine, Commr. To C.Beadon, Secy. to Govt. of India, Fort William, Jabalpur, 5th July 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857. Part II, No.350. (N.A.I.).

73. N.E., Jalaun, para 22, p. 500.

74. Ibid, p. 500.

therefore, the situation in this station had been quite tense, causing no little uneasiness among the English. Lloyd, the Collector raised fresh Levies of 500 men, brought one jamadar and ten chaprasies from every tahsildari and two barkandages from each thana. Besides, on being asked each of the Chiefs of Chirkhari, Eehri and Baoni sent hundred men and one gun.⁷⁵ The Collector was particularly distrustful of the sepoys of the treasure guard consisting of the Subahdar's men of the 56th regiment. He however placed extreme reliance on the Bundela auxiliaries.⁷⁶

On the 12th of June a meeting was held at a large house occupied by the Chirkhari troops. It was attended by the headmen of each band of the Bundela auxiliaries, the Subahdar of the 56th regiment on duty over the treasury and one or two civilian officials. The next day, the guards at the treasury refused to give up the keys when asked to do so "... and tightened their wrist bands for action". On the 14th morning, some troops arrived at Hamirpur from Beoni. Their headman, Rahim-ud-din, withdrew guns posted in Lloyd's compounds and turned them on the house. Meanwhile, some sepoys released the prisoners from the jail. Faced with an imminent crisis, the English officials decided to flee. The same morning, two English officers of the 1st Regiment that had mutinied at Kanpur, reached Hamirpur enroute Orai. Raikes and Browne,

75. Narrative of Events connected with the Mutiny at Hamirpur, 1857-58 by George H. Freeling, para 3, p. 490.

76. From C. Chester, Commr. 4th Dvn. To Lt. Col. R. Strachey, Allahabad, 22nd Oct. 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch, 27th Nov. 1857, No. 6. (N.A.I.).

the two officers and Lloyd and Grant, the officials of the town prepared to escape. Their horses were made ready and saddled in the charge of two sowars who were also given some money for expenses on the road. The two soldiers carried off the horses, crying out to the approaching mutineers that the 'Sahib log' were running away. The four, however got away but the rest of the English officials and their families who had remained behind, were all killed.

The Bundela auxillaries joined the other soldiers in mutiny and now all began plundering the station. Apart from the Government property and those of the English civilians, the wealthy men were also looted. The Christian preacher Jeremiah and his family were killed and the Bengali babus "... as writing English were attacked and all their possessions taken away ..." The mutineers fired on boats carrying sepoys of the 44th and 67th Regiments disarmed at Agra and plundered them.

Meanwhile, the Subahdar of the infantry regiment proclaimed the rule of Delhi in Hamirpur, he himself professing to ^{be} the Emperor's Agent. Lloyd and Grant who had for some days hidden in a village three miles from Jamuna were discovered on the 18th and brought to the Subahdar. They were taken to the Kacheri Compound on the 19th, bound to trees, made to kneel and then shot dead.⁷⁷

The following day, a troop of cavalry and a company of infantry came from Kanpur to assist the soldiers in removing

77. N.E., Hamirpur, 1857-58, para 9, p. 491.

the treasure from Hamirpur. All left the station on the 21st whereafter the sepoys of the Bundela auxiliaries returned to their respective villages.⁷⁸

3.2.5 Banda.

This district had been up in rebellion since early June but the 3 Companies of the 1st Bengal Native Infantry did not mutiny. In fact, the Collector sent the treasure through detachments officered by Indians who "... honorably acquitted themselves of their trust only a few days before the outbreak at Cawnpoor". In Banda, the rest of the money was placed in the infantry lines and both Mayne, the Collector and Lt. Bennett, the officer commanding the detachment felt they could depend on the soldiers at the station.

In view of the prevailing insurrection all around, however, the officials prepared for every contingency. In order to provision a place where in emergency the English could take refuge, Mayne chose the jail and stored grain and atta for the purpose. This action led to the spread of a general belief among the najibs of the jail that the grain had been stored to be mixed with cow bones for their food. Mayne forestalled a mutiny among these najibs by severely reprimanding them and threatening them with dismissal and severe punishment. Two Muslim proclamations were put up in the city, calling for the extermination of the Christians but these caused no immediate reactions in the town.

78. From Chester To Strachey, 22nd Oct. 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch. 27th Nov. 1857, No.6. (N.A.I.).

The first uprising took place in Banda, when a verbal message from Muhamad Sardar Khan, the Deputy Collector at Chilla-Tara, to the effect that mutinous cavalry troops were crossing Jamuna into Banda conveyed to Mayne in an open Kacheri, spread around and some people tool to plundering the town. The English women were taken to the Nawab's palace and the situation brought under control. Soon after, a few sowars crossed the river at Chilla-Tara and set up a green flag at the village of Chilla and reports reached Banda that soldiers from Kanpur were marching on the station. A change was observable among the people. Mayne wrote, "A different tone was soon manifest in the Police, they no longer obeyed orders with their usual alacrity, and not a single man, horse or foot, could be obtained for extra levies". Having ^{shelter} taken/in the palace, Mayne was convinced that while the Nawab professed his friendship to the British, his followers were determined to kill them" our enemies were within the walls, even more numerous than those outside ..." 79

The sepoys of the 1st Bengal Native Infantry finally declared mutiny on the afternoon of 14th June, the same day that their counterparts in Hamirpur rose. The sepoys entrusted with the remaining treasure refused to give up a single rupee. They also sent word to the Jail Darogah that the grain stored in the jail and two guns which Mayne had ordered to be

79. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the District of Banda, 1857-58. Part I. From F.O. Mayne, Magistrate & Coll. of Banda To C. Chester, Commr. Allahabad Dvn. 11th Sept. 1857, paras 12-16, pp. 317-318.

brought to the palace, were not to leave the place but should await the orders of their subahdar who was marching with troops to occupy Banda. The sepoys seized the magazine that contained some 80,000 rounds of cartridge and three times that number of blank cartridges. Lt. Bennett reported he could no longer control his soldiers.

The English officials in the palace meanwhile decided to make an attempt at recapturing the guns in the jail with the aid of Ali Bahadur and his 125 soldiers. They also wanted to force the sepoys of the 1st Regiment into giving up the treasure and ammunition with the assistance of the Ajaigarh troops. The Nawab's soldiers were drawn up in the palace court-yard. To use Mayne's description "A large and tumultuous assembly of rabble and town's people had meanwhile assembled in the court-yard, and we were surrounded on all sides. The moment was a critical one. The Nawab's sepoys, when first paraded, had exhibited a sullen and disorderly disposition and when Lt. Bennett assumed the command, ... broke out into open mutiny and attacked that officer with their bayonets, shouting and vociferating in the most outrageous manner ..." The Nawab intervened but the sepoys marched straight off to the cantonments of the 1st Native Infantry, singing the Jehad and calling upon all Muslims to exterminate the firangi (foreigners). The soldiers in the lines sounded the alarm and armed themselves. The entire district was up in arms. The English officials fled from the station and Banda like all the neighbouring towns of Kanpur, Fatehpur,

Allahabad, Hamirpur and Nowgong, was left to the sepoys and the residents of the town.⁸⁰

All former English residences and offices were plundered and burnt down. On the 15th morning, a company of sepoys marched to release the prisoners from the jail and took possession of the two guns, ammunition and all the commissariat stores that had been kept there. The Ajaigarh troops sent by their Rani to assist the British, now joined the 1st regiment. Accompanied by the chaprasies and jail najibs, the sepoys and auxiliary levies plundered the Treasury and missionary school in Banda. The Europeans in the school were released only after they were converted into Muslims. Many of the leading merchants of the town, possibly to save themselves, distributed sweetmeats to celebrate the overthrow of British authority.

On the 14th evening, Ali Bahadur proclaimed his rule and with some police, made arrangements to save the town from being plundered. Next morning, the sepoys brought out another proclamation. "Khulq Khoda Ki, Mulk Badshah Ka, Hukm Subahdar Sepoy Bahadur Ka", (The world is God's, the country Emperor's and the rule is of the soldiers) in disregard to the one Ali Bahadur had issued the previous night. The erstwhile Nawab was now forced to acknowledge the authority of the soldiers and treated them to sweets. The soldiers called the civil officials and told them that they would be retained in their

80. Ibid, paras 18-22, pp. 318-320.

respective appointments. Muhammad Sardar Khan, the Deputy Collector, a much trusted servant of the English was now appointed the Nazim of Banda with considerable power. The slaughter of cows and bullocks were for-bidden throughout the town. The Tahsildar, Mir Farnat Ali was seized and sentries posted over the tahsil treasury. Cockerell, the Joint Magistrate, who had arrived from Kirwi that same day, was killed at the palace gateway as were a number of east Indian officials who had not fled.

On the 17th of June, the Chief Officers among the sepoys paid a state visit to Ali Bahadur and held a council of war. The right of sovereignty of the Nawab over Banda was disputed by Dhowa, a chieftan of Ajaigarh. The sepoys decided that pending a reference to the Nana of Bithur, the Nawab should assume charge of the country on their departure. They left on the 19th of June for Kanpur with a treasure of 2 lakhs, accompanied by some of the Nawab's sowars, his agent and the agent of the Ajaigarh chief. The Ajaigarh troops retired to their own country.⁸¹ The links of the soldiers in Banda with Kanpur, decided their obvious loyalty to the Nana primarily, rather than to Delhi.

The army's allegiance to the British had completely snapped. There was no necessity to pay deference any longer to English Command. A detachment of the 42nd Native Infantry

81. Ibid, Part II, paras 5-9, pp. 324-326; From R.R.W.Ellis, Pol. Asstt. for Bundelkhand & Rewa To Secy. to the Govt. of India, Nagode, 2nd July 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 31st July 1857, No.182 (N.A.I.).

posted in Sagar had been sent to Malthone in Southern Lalitpur. Following, the outbreak in all the towns in the North, Maj. Gaussen, in command of the detachment ordered it to return to Sagar. From the day the order was given out most of the soldiers and the Indian officers of 42nd Infantry regiment and the Irregular Cavalry unit deserted.⁸² Desertion was quite frequently resorted to as a form of opposition to the English. The sepoy's accompanying a group of European fugitives from Mahoba on their way to Banda, gradually began to drop out during their march especially when the villagers threatened to attack them. There were eventually half the original number of soldiers left. The drummers and the bandmen had deserted even before the English had started.⁸³ In these instances, lacking the support of the entire regiment, soldiers in isolated groups did not openly declare mutiny. But their overturned fidelity was expressed through varied forms of protest.

3.3. July to December 1857.

The direct role of the soldiers in the politics of Bundelkhand in 1857-58 for all practical purposes, begins and ends with overthrowing the British administration. The alternate structure of government that emerged in the district

82. From Maj. W.C. Western, Dy. Commr. 1st class Sagar, To Maj. W.C. Erskine, Commr. Sagar 20th July 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 30th Oct. 1857. No. 573 (N.A.I.).

83. From R.R.W. Ellis to Secy. to the Govt. of India, Nagode, 24th June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 31st July 1857, No. 177 (N.A.I.).

towns centred on different regional potentates, the erstwhile Rajas and Ranis whose power the English had diminished. But they were put up as puppets for what they symbolised rather than as repositories of any decisive power. Immediate decisions were now taken by the former Indian officials or political upstarts. Rarely were soldiers involved in the day-to-day political and administrative affairs. Their constant mobility prevented them from asserting any lasting authority. But their mutiny had made a major difference. They were no longer appendages to political authority. Their power was not the passive force that the new order could employ when required. The soldiers had created the order and they were to retain their overriding prerogative. Besides, Bundelkhand was never totally denuded of the physical presence of the soldiers. Not all the sepoys left the towns and even when they did others from stations in the west and south on their way up north arrived. And after Delhi and Kanpur were lost, Kalpi became the centre of resistance, where all assembled in their last ditch effort to retain what they had gained through rebellion.

This was a critical phase in the movement of the soldiers, a phase of constructing a new order, of reinforcing and strengthening it and of zealously defending it against internal forces of betrayal and external forces of aggression. The forces of rebellion therefore, had to be mobilised, all energies concentrated into building bastions of impregnability that the adversary would not be able to break. The choice of Delhi and Kanpur as focal centres of rebellion

was obvious. Bahadur Shah and Nana Sahib were living reminders of the political inversion by the English. They also symbolised an authority that stood over regional, localised units of government while at the same time legitimising them and placing all in an ordered arrangement. It was this overarching arrangement that the soldiers upheld, trying to establish perfect coordination among its multiple fragments and to cement the props of its support. Their nexus of operation stretched across the entire region in North India that the new political order embraced. The soldiers were therefore, constantly on the move from one point to the other, from different regions to the centre to ensure concerted and consolidated actions against the enemy. Bundelkhand witnessed a two-way movement of soldiers; while regiments posted there, moved out, several others moved in, the final destinations of all being either Delhi or Kanpur.

After leaving Jhansi, the soldiers first halted at Mote, ~~thirty~~ thirty-five miles south-east of the town on the 13th of June.

Here they plundered the treasury and took away with them as prisoners, Niaz Ali, the Deputy Collector.⁸⁴ They then stopped at Orai before proceeding further north. They were next heard of in September. The Jhansi troops with their artillery and assisted by a number of other insurgents, had taken up a strong position before the town of Bulandshahr. On the

84. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the Division of Jhansi in 1857-58, By Capt. J.W. Pinkney, Commr. Jhansi, 20th Nov. 1858, para 47, p. 515.

28th morning, the existing British force attacked and defeated them and drove them out of the town. The soldiers dispersed in different directions.⁸⁵

Meanwhile in Jhansi, Laxmi Bai set out to take control of the situation. One of her first measures was to raise an army. She not only recruited the local men and those provided by the neighbouring Rajput thakurs and zaminders but a number of soldiers of the British army joined her. There were in her service, about 300 Vilayaitis, 500 sowars and 80 sepoys of the Scindia's contingent who were disarmed at Asirgarh in the Nimar district of the Central Provinces.⁸⁶ Though the new government was formally set up in the name of Laxmi Bai, it was her officials who commanded effective authority. Several among them were formerly civil officials in the British government, Bakshish Ali, the Jail Darogah, Muhamad Bux, the Jamadar of prisons, Kashi Nath Bhaiya, the Tahsildar of Pundwaha, Lalu Baksh, Jharu Kunwar, Mama Sahib, Laxmi Bai's father, Moro Balwant were among those who formed a kind of council that in all semblances ran the government in Jhansi between July 1857 and March 1858.

Following the departure of soldiers from Hamirpur, the Deputy Collector, Wahiduzaman took over the administration of the town under directions from the Lieutenant - Governor of

85. From Mil. Secy. To the Chief Commr. of the Panjab, 28th Sept. 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 27th Nov. 1857. No.46 (N.A.I.).

86. Abstract Trans. of the statement of Aman Khan, 14th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.283 (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 24-27.

the North-Western Province. On the 29th of June, however, Nana Sahib sent an order from Kanpur that the Deputy should manage the district in the former's name. On the 1st of July, Pashwa's rule was proclaimed in Hamirpur and on the 3rd, a second proclamation was issued to the effect that Poona and Satara had fallen and the English were exterminated. The landholders were ordered to pay their revenue to the Nana's agent. Wahiduzaman sent parwanas to the tahsildars and thanadars of the district asking them to remain at their posts and act in obedience to the Nana.⁸⁷ All the Indian officials accepted the new order until hearing of the English reoccupation of Fatehpur and Kanpur at the end of July, most left for their homes.⁸⁸

In Banda too, a council was formed by Mirza Vilayat Hussain, Mirza Imdad Ali Beg, Mir Inshalla, Muhammad Sardar Khan, the Deputy Collector, Mir Farhat Ali, the Tahsildar and Seth Udai Karan, the banker and it carried on the Government with Ali Bahadur as the Nawab. Muhammad Sardar Khan was appointed the Nazim on a salary of Rs.1,000/-, Mir Ishalla was made Sipah Sular, Mirza Vilayat Hussain became the Naib Reasat, Mirza Imdad Ali Beg, in-charge of the finance department and Mir Farhat Ali, the Munserim or assistant to the nazim on a salary of Rs.400/-. Men were recruited as soldiers from the Jais pargana of Awadh, where Mir Inshalla himself

87. From C.Chester To R.Strachey, 22nd Oct. 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch, 27th Nov. 1857. No.6 (N.A.I.); From R.R.W.Ellis To G.F.Edmenstone, Nagode, 10th Aug. 1857, For. Sec. Cons. 25th Sept. 1857, Nos.268-270. (N.A.I.).

88. N.E., Hamirpur, para 13, p. 492.

came from and the alternate order was established in the precincts of the town.⁸⁹

Kesho Rao, the Chief of Gurserai had assumed temporary charge over Jalaun after the overthrow of the English. Most of the Amlah took service under him. Gradually, however, Kalpi emerged as the centre of rebellion as soldiers from the north came flocking to this town in the wake of English counter-march. After Kanpur was reoccupied by British forces. Kalpi became the Peshwa's headquarters. Muhammad Ishack, a former thanadar acting as Nana Sahib's nazim came to Kalpi and established control over a number of neighbouring villages.

His jurisdiction extended to parts of the Kanpur district as well.⁹⁰

All this time, Bundelkhand was being constantly traversed by bands of soldiers from the neighbouring districts. A long struggle was waged over Delhi between the 8th of June, when the English first entered the city and the 20th of September, the day their victory was completed.⁹¹ In these months, all efforts of the soldiers were geared to reinforcing rebel force in Delhi. The objective was thus to reach the city from wherever the soldiers had risen up in arms. Kanpur fell into British hands with less resistance. Henry Havelock entered this town in victory on the 17th of July.⁹² But as a

89. N.E., Banda. Pt.II, para 10, p.326, para 13, p. 327.

90. N.E., Jalaun, paras 7-9, p. 497.

91. S.N.Sen, Eighteen fifty-seven (Delhi, 1957), pp. 79-108.

92. Ibid.

political powerhead, Nana Sahib, ably assisted by his lieutenant Tantya Topi was much more active than Bahadur Shah. Even after his defeat in Kanpur, the Peshwa continued to evolve alternate strategies of action to counteract English success. He mobilised forces and planned an attack on Kanpur in order to recover it from the English. After the city and the neighbouring district were totally lost, Nana Sahib and Tantya Topi moved south. Their new headquarters now became Kalpi, in the Jalaun district. Both came to Bundelkhand around October 1857. From this time till the fall of Kalpi to Hugh Rose's forces, Tantya Topi took upon himself the leadership and organisation of rebellion. His base of operations was Central India, particularly Bundelkhand and the main force that he mobilised was provided by the soldiers.

On their march first for Kanpur and then Kalpi, soldiers crossed the entire division of Bundelkhand halting usually and for long at two places, depending on the direction they came from. Those coming from the east or south east stopped at Banda, those from the west and west-south-west bivouaced at Jhansi. From September till December, a continuous stream of soldiers poured into Banda. On the 2nd of September, the 7th and 8th Regiment Native Infantry from Dinapur arrived.⁹³ They plundered the surrounding area as far as Kalinjar.⁹⁴ In September, the soldiers of the 50th Regiment Native Infantry after mutinying in Nagode came to Banda on the 27th.

93. N.E., Banda, Pt.II, para 21, p. 328.

94. From R.R.W.Ellis To G.F.Edmonstone, Mayne, Webster & other Civil Officers from Banda, Nagode, 19th June, 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 25th Sept. 1857, No.352. (N.A.I.).

On the 29th, Kunwar Singh with a few thousand men, including the sepoy of the 40th Native Infantry were received by Ali Bahadur at Banda. A great many detachments continued to reach Banda and more were called from Awadh. The soldiers tried to patch up differences between Ali Bahadur and the Chief of Ajaigarh so that there may not be any division till the common adversary, the English were totally exterminated. Unable to make the Dhowa of Ajaigarh agree to a reconciliation, the soldiers reinforcing the forces of the Nawab inflicted on the former a crushing defeat. Fresh soldiers of the 5th Irregular Cavalry arrived from Bhagalpur on the 15th of October.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Nana Sahib was said to have written to Kunwar Singh to join him in an attack on Kanpur.⁹⁶ Kunwar Singh with his men left Banda for Kalpi on the 25th of October while the 7th and the 8th Regiments, accompanied by other soldiers started for Chilla Tara with three guns. Subahdar Mehtab Ali of the 8th Native Infantry stayed back at Banda, commanding detachments of different corps which he formed into one Regiment. The Nawab had his own army of 1,000 Infantry soldiers, 600 cavalry troopers, some 15 guns and 10,000 matchlockmen.⁹⁷ Reinforcements of soldiers, however, continued to come. Six fresh Regiments arrived in the Banda district around the end of November. Four of the

95. N.E., Banda, Pt.II, paras 22-25, p. 329.

96. From R.R.W.Ellis To G.F.Edmonstone, Fort Kalinjar, 8th Oct. 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 30th Oct. 1857, No.204 (N.A.I.).

97. N.E., Banda, Pt.II, paras 25-29, p. 329.

regiments were reported to be at Mhow and two at Surdwa near Rajapur on the 21st. They were said to have come from the east.⁹⁸ Early in December, two companies of the 32nd Regiment arrived on the 31st December; some sowars of the 5th Irregular cavalry seized and murdered the Kotwal of Banda on suspicion of corresponding with the English magistrate.⁹⁹ All concerted efforts were geared towards strengthening defences against the potential danger of the adversary invading.

None of the soldiers had come to Banda, to stay. Most left after a few weeks, the destination being Kalpi. Meanwhile, Tantya Topi moved south and occupied Jalaun and Kuchwahagar setting up Muhammad Ishack as the agent of the Nana in November 1857. They seized the Chief of Gurserai, the nominee of the English to the government of Jalaun, and laid aside his authority.¹⁰⁰ Soldiers from Banda and Jhansi marched on to Kalpi, the new Headquarters. Nana Sahib, himself was reported to be in to Jalaun.¹⁰¹ The soldiers of the Gwalior contingent at Mhow (near Indore) under the direction of Tantya Topi marched towards Jhansi and eventually arrived at Kalpi,¹⁰² Tantya Topi at the head of the Morar

98. Copy of Service Message sent from Panna, 27th Nov. 1857. For.Sec. Progs. 18th Dec. 1857, No.188 (N.A.I.).

99. N.E., Banda, Pt.II, para 30, p. 330.

100. The Native Princes of India - Scindia, Parl. Papers, No.6 of 1858. pp. 94-112. F.S.U.P., pp. 167-205.

101. From Lt. Col. H.M.Durand, Offg. Agent to the Gov. Gen. for Central India To G.F.Edmonstone, 15th Oct. 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.838 (N.A.I.).

102. Ibid.

soldiers proceeded to effect a junction with the Mandla force in order to bring together a large well equipped force under the command of the Nana.¹⁰³ These soldiers together with those freshly arrived from Banda, formed a fairly large army of 12,000. In November, they occupied the Kalpi fort which they furnished with their guns, ammunition and treasure. They prepared to march on to Kanpur which they resolved to attack.¹⁰⁴

Leaving a detachment at Jalaun, with eight guns and 400 men and a seventh part of their magazine at Kalpi, the army crossed Jamuna around the 15th of November and reached Kanpur on the 1st of December. Reinforced by forces from Awadh, they occupied most of Kanpur until the 6th of December but were finally defeated by fresh British forces on the 10th. The soldiers returned to Kalpi to rally around Tantya Topi.¹⁰⁵

In Kalpi, now, an altered structure of administration was evolved. Many papers later found showed that British forms were observed in civil department and in the military organisation. Some papers related to villages in the Kanpur district.¹⁰⁶ British districts were possibly redrawn as the model of government came to rest on different source of power and authority.

103. Ibid.

104. Copy of a Service Message received by Electric Telegraph from Panna, 19th Nov. 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.186 (N.A.I.).

105. The Native Princes of India - Sciendia, Parl. Papers, No.6 of 1858. pp. 94-112. F.S.U.P., pp. 167-205.

106. N.E., Jalaun, para 9, p. 497.

3.4. January to June 1858

3.4.1 Tantya Topi in Bundelkhand.

A new realm was established in Bundelkhand with Nana Sahib as the Sovereign over all regional potentates. So far as the political structure was concerned, it was a reversal to the former fragmented pattern where local chiefs in their respective domains remained more or less independent under the overarching but nominal sovereignty of a centralised figure head. The difference lay in the fact that the political power sprang not from the rulers but soldiers whose mutiny created the new order. Tantya Topi's strength lay in the soldiers he commanded. The authority with which he set out to work a new strategy of operations, was derived from the mutineers. Bereft of them, neither Nana Sahib nor Tantya Topi would have made any difference to the politics of Bundelkhand. Ultimately they represented, impersonated the strength of the innumerable soldiers up in arms against the English.

The first act of Tantya Topi and Nana Sahib towards building up a defensive strategy was to mobilise the support of the local Chiefs and bring them together. Verbal messages were sent to inform all, of the progress of rebellion, the dangers that assailed it and the need to safeguard it. The messages also carried open calls for action, for outright war against the enemy. The code of communication and the source of legitimisation for waging the battle were drawn from religion which was loudly proclaimed to be in danger. The means for striking solidarity was sought in Christian heresy

that had to be rooted out of soil lest it desecrated the latter's purity and defiled its sanctity. The agents of pollution had to be purged, hence all Europeans killed; and all those ranged in favour of religion needed to come together in combat. The jeopardised religion allowed no choice, left no golden mean of compromise. There could be either a total crusade against the infidels or identification with them. If one supported rebellion it had to be an active one for the sake of the safety of his religion. If one did not, he himself became a polluting agent, an infidel, a Christian. He had to be destroyed.¹⁰⁷

On the 31st of December 1857, Tantya Topi sent letters to a number of local rulers in Bundelkhand and further south in Central India, formally intimating them that certain Syed Muhammad Ishaq was appointed by the Peshwa as his aide-de-camp to manage affairs in Bundelkhand. Muhammad Ishaq had already arrived at Kalpi and was to write to all the chiefs who in turn were to send back their replies to him.¹⁰⁸ Ishaq's letter followed soon after. Written on 2nd January 1858, it carried appeals to all the Rajas for assistance.

"My master, Sreemunt Maharaja Peshwa Bahadur at the sacrifice of every ease and comfort as well as of his wealth, property etc., has for the purpose of defending the religion both of the Hindoos and Mahomedans prepared himself to slaughter the

107. cf. N.Z. Davis, 'The Rites of Violence' in Society and Culture in Early Modern France (Stanford, 1975), pp. 152-187.

108. Trans. of a circular letter from Tantia, dated 31st Dec. 1857 addressed to Raja Bahadur Bukht Bali, Raja Narpat Singh, the Rani of Jhansi, Raja Hindupat, Raja Bahadur Mardan Singh, Kunwar Niranjan Singh, Raja Bahadur Ratan Singh, For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No. 619 (N.A.I.). F.S.U.P., p. 211.

followers of Christ as they are the enemies of the faith of the Mussulmans and Hindoos. The said Maharaja has by waging a war with the Christians put several of them to the sword and has resolved not to refrain himself from killing them as long as he breathes his vital air, and to annihilate at once the people of this race now in India. The object which the Maharaja has in view to expel all the Christians from Hindoostan is not to take possession of the territories and property of the Rajahs and Chiefs of India, or to assume the Supreme Command of the country, but on the other hand, it is his sole desire that after a victory shall have been obtained over the enemy, all the Chiefs may in peace enjoy the possession of the territories which they formerly possessed, and pass their days in the enjoyment of ease and happiness. If all the Chiefs for the purpose of defending their religion and faith, join together and be of one mind, and render as much assistance as they respectively can, it will not be difficult to annihilate through divine favour all the remaining Christians. Under the orders of the aforesaid Sreemunt Peshwa Bahadur, I beg to inform you all that in a recent war at Cawnpore, our force has for some reasons, retreated, and that troops are now being assembled at Cawnpore. It will be a friendly act on your part, if you now render assistance by sending troops and guns without loss of time. My employer warmly hopes that all the Chiefs of Bundelcund will be of one mind to assist him in the undertaking, as formely the Peshwa of Poona, when he was in power, rendered assistance to the Chiefs of this country and paid every regard to their honour and dignity. Under these circumstances it is hoped that you should as soon as possible despatch to Calpee in charge of a trustworthy person such number of men and guns as you may be able to furnish". 109 (emphasis mine)

- Another letter with similar contents was written by Tantya Topi on the same day, presumably also for circulation.¹¹⁰
- Tantya Topi wrote a separate letter to Dewan Sardar Singh,

109. Trans. of a circular letter addressed to the Chiefs of Bundelkhand by an individual styling himself Mohamad Ishaq, Aide-de-Camp to Maharaja Sreemant Peshwa, 2nd Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, No.2132 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 211-212.

110. Trans. of a letter from Ramchandra Pandurang Tantya Topi to the Maharajas of ... 2nd Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1858, Suppl. No.620. (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 213-214.

the Jagirdar of Chirkhari who was noted for his staunch support to the English. Dated 3rd January, it read,

"You and all other Hindus and Mahommedans should unite together in defence of your religion. Those who wanted its destruction have been killed by their own sepoys ... Your family have been Rajas(sic) for thousands of years; put to death all the Europeans in your territory, or seize them and send them here as ordered by the Peshwa, send troops and supplies of money here, the sepoys are all ready to come to your assistance, should anybody dispute these orders, I shall consider them in the same light as the Sahibs. It behoves you to join in the cause of religion. Don't fail to send money and troops in our assistance" 111 (emphasis mine)

Dewan Sirdar Singh received another letter from two subahdars of the army, written on the 2nd of January. The purpose of the letter was to inform the Chief of the arrival of some Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery troops at Jalalpur and to ask him for assistance.

"You have obtained possession and now rule over the British district in Bundelkhand, and it is therefore incumbent on you to hold yourself steady in the cause of 'Deen' (religion)

If you suspect anybody, write and say so, if you are unwilling to assist in the matter, write and say so. We will make arrangements if you send Troops and money according to your means we shall know that you are for the 'Deen', and those who do not furnish either, will be considered against the 'Deen' All Chiefs upto Delhi are ready in the cause of the 'Deen' consider of the utmost importance the little that has been written". 112 (emphasis mine)

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111. Trans. of letters from Rajasri, Martand Rao, Tantya & Janardan Rao Anna on behalf of Pradhan Peshwa Bahadur To Maharaja Kunwar Sri Dewan Sirdar Singh, Jagirdar of Chirkhari, 3rd Jan. 1857. For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, No.2133 (N.A.I.).
112. From Moha Singh & Shamsheer Khan Subahdars To Sri Maharaj Kunwar Singh, Dewan Sirdar Singh, Jalalpur, 2nd Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858. No.2133 (N.A.I.).

The dissentient Chief was written to again a few days later. This was a curt note demanding immediate supplies to be send. The option of not doing so had been closed.¹¹³

The call for Deen or religion was as much a slogan for mobilising support in favour of rebellion, as it was a means to gain its acceptability and legitimacy. But underlying this slogan, the semaphore, was an entire concept of an alternate moral order encapsulating both State and society. Elements, which put together built the framework of this new order, drew their ideological content from religion, the notion of what deen stood for. Supported by the vision of such an order, military and political strategies were contrived for consolidating it by winning wide support and squashing dissidence.

In Kalpi, the soldiers were strongly entrenched. They had twelve large and small guns kept inside the fort and steps were being taken to defend and fortify the town. Batteries were erected on the ghat of the Jamuna towards Kanpur and on the Hamirpur road and guns placed on the fort. Half the bridge over Jamuna was broken and all the boats from different ghats from Hamirpur to Jagmanpur in Jalaun beyond Kalpi were captured, all in order to prevent British forces from marching from the North. Raising fresh levies from among the local people, Tantya Topi collected about 2,000 men

113. From the Subadars to Sirdar Singh, 5th Sumbut, For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, No.2133 (N.A.I.).

in Kuchwahaghar.¹¹⁴ The rebel force continued to increase as soldiers from Fatehgarh and about a thousand Mewatis from Kanpur joined them at Kalpi.¹¹⁵ At the same time, a detachment of troops was sent to Jalalpur, a town on the Betwa in the Hamirpur district.¹¹⁶ The Raja of Chirkhari was asked to supply the troops with reinforcements.¹¹⁷ Instead the Raja deputed a force of 1,600 men and four guns to attack the soldiers.¹¹⁸ The former were repulsed with great loss.¹¹⁹

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114. News from Bundelkhand, 5th Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.265 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 217-221; News from Bundelkhand, 5th Jan. 1858, For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858, No.115 (N.A.I.).
115. Telegraphic message from Lt. Gov. Allahabad To the Gov.Gen. Cal. Allahabad, 12th Jan. 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 29th Jan. 1858, Pt.I. No.75 (N.A.I). F.S. U.P., p.214; Abstract of Intelligence from Bundelkhand, 26th Jan. 1858; For. Sec. Cons. 26th March 1858, Nos.32-33 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., pp. 215-216.
116. Further Papers (No.8) relative to the Mutinities in the East Indies, Inclosure 1 in No.2, p. 31.
117. From Moha Singh & Shamshere Khan Subahdars To Sirdar Singh, Jalalpur, 2nd Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, No.2133 (N.A.I.).
118. Further Papers (No.8) relative to the Mutinies in the East Indies. Inclosure 1 in No.2, p. 31.
119. Abstract of Intelligence, n.d. For. Sec. Cons. 26th March 1858, No.42 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p. 216.

Contingent of soldiers were dispersed in other stations as well. They added to ~~the~~ numbers of the force that Laxmi Bai and Ali Bahadur commanded at Jhansi and Banda. Seven regiments with fourteen guns marched from Banda towards Chilla Tara to guard the ghat on the Jamuna early in January,¹²⁰ while about a thousand sepoys and ¹²¹ sowars from different stations fortified the town of Jhansi.

The first rebel offensive was directed against the Chirkhari State because as Tantiya Topi writing to Nana Sahib on the 31st of January said, "the Raja does not support the rebels".¹²² In building ~~up~~ a concerted resistance against the English, all dissensions had to be squashed. The subahdars and other officers of the Gwalior contingent sent letters to their counterparts serving the Raja of Chirkhari with appeals to join them in their fight for religion. "Come forth having a regard for your faith and your spiritual welfare : The pay of each sepoy would be ten rupees per month and that of a subahdar or other officers higher according to his rank".¹²³ Chirkhari was invested on the 1st of February. The Raja of Chirkhari was forced to pay three lakhs of rupees to the conquering forces. A part

120. Further Papers (No.8), p. 31.

121. Abstract of Intelligence from Bundelkhand, 26th Jan. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 26th March 1858, Nos.32-33 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p. 221.

122. Trans. of a letter from Tantiya Topi To Peshwa Sahib, Chirkhari, 31st Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.627 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 228-229.

123. Trans. of Hindi letter from Subahdars and other officers in the Gwalior Contingent, to the address of the Subahdars and other Officers in the service of the Rajah of Chirkhari, Rath, 31st Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859. Nos.1365-1366 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., pp. 229-230.

of the sum was sent to the Nana while the rest kept back to meet the wages of the soldiers.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, assistance in men and arms was sought from Ali Bahadur and Nana Sahib. Parwanas were also addressed to the sardars and sepoys in the service of the Chattarpur State dated the 17th of February, asking them ^{to} join the force with arms and ammunition, in defence of religion. "Should you not feel interest (sic) in your religion you are to give a decisive answer" ¹²⁵ Nana Sahib issued the following proclamation on the 26th of February"

"The Chief of Chirkhari did not come to terms with the government neither did he embrace the course of religion, that infidel having no regard for religion is prepared to fight ... "The Chief (of Chirkhari), sides with the English against the supporters of faith. Therefore declared that everyone should consider him as an Englishman and send him to hell. After Chirkhari is taken, everyone will receive a gratuity equivalent to one month's pay, the heirs of those who fall in action will be provided for. The city after it is taken will be plundered. The men of the army will be allowed to plunder goods upto the value of Rs.100/. Plunder exceeding that will belong to the government. Men who act contrary will be denied one month's pay in gratuity. Everyone should know these orders and act accordingly".¹²⁶ (emphasis mine).

Invading Chirkhari was one of the first offensive acts undertaken by rebels in Bundelkhand, to consolidate their alternate order. The need for getting together more support and mobilising more resources was imminent. The call for war

124. Abstract Trans. of a letter from Ramchand Pandurang Topi Chirkhari, 7th Feb. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No. 633 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 234-235.

125. From R. Hamilton, Agent to the Gov. Gen. for Central India To G. F. Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Jhansi, 29th March 1858, For. Sec. Progs. 28th May 1858, Nos. 122-123 (N.A.I.).

126. Trans. of a proclamation issued by Peshwa, Chirkhari, 26th Feb. 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 28th May 1858, Nos. 151-152 (N.A.I.)

not only held out the vision of an ideal, moral order but carried tangible incentives of material gains. Service for insurgency would be paid in accordance with a statutory scale. Plunder was sanctioned within limits set down by the mandate. Here, plunder denoted no illegal appropriation of property but laying claims on what quite legitimately belonged to the rebels. The claims, however, would not be arbitrarily distributed but apportioned in an orderly manner so that each could have his share.

The city and fort of Chirkhari were finally taken by the rebel force on the 1st of March. Most of the Raja's soldiers joined the mutineers or deserted. Many of his own servants also forsook him when the rebels gained possession of the city, the few troops remaining with the Raja retreated into the fort but displayed a strong spirit of disaffection. They declined to fight thereby compelling the Chief to call a truce.¹²⁷ In honour of their victory, the soldiers fired 22 gun salutes.¹²⁸

J. H. Carne, the Assistant Magistrate on duty at Chirkhari, who was present during the seige and capture of the town observed the organised and systematic way in which

127. From J.H.Carne, Asstt. Magistrate on duty at Chirkhari To the Secy. to the Govt. of India with the Gov.Gen. 4th March 1858. "The Native Princes' of India: 1860, Chirkhari," Parliamentary Papers, No.18, pp. 73-74. F.S.U.P., pp. 241-247.

128. Trans. of a circular letter from Pandurang Sadashiv To Tai Bai of Jalaun, Laxmi Bai of Jhansi, Ali Bahadur of Banda, Kalpi, 4th March, 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.644 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p. 247.

the soldiers conducted the operations.

"They (the rebels) received reinforcements from Calpee of from 500 to 800 sepoys. They could affect their relief parties; while some fought, others rested, as one set was observed going away, another was seen coming to take their places, even during the continuance of the conflict. They had their bugle calls during the last grand assault, and each separate band of matchlock-men was led on and performed its assigned task under the tuition evidently of some of the smartest sepoys who had been instructed by us in the art of war. They had their hospital doolies, and they appeared to have a large and well regulated bazar with abundance of supplies. They in short, displayed all the active energies of the battle-field, ..." 129

The organisation and discipline that the English State had imparted to its soldiers for its own security now backfired. The soldiers were fighting against the state machinery with its own tools.

3.4.2 In defence ...

The distant but distinct rumblings of the British counter-insurgency forces were beginning to be heard early in February 1858. The British army marched from the southwest. Sagar was taken on the 15th of February and Hugh Rose prepared to march upon Jhansi.¹³⁰ The first resistance was offered by the Rajas of Shahghar and Banpur in the Lalitpur district. Therefore, forces were sent south to assist the Bundela chiefs Tantiya Topi wrote to Nana Sahib that after arranging the affairs at Chirkhari, he intended to proceed with

129. From *Carne To the Secy. to the Govt. of India*, 4th March 1858. Parl. Papers, No.18 pp. 73-74. F.S.U.P., pp. 241-247.

130. Thomas Lowe, Central India during the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858 (London, 1860), p. 205.

men and guns to join the Rajas in Lalitpur.¹³¹ On the 3rd of February, Gangadhar Bhaia with three companies and 2 Rissalas (cavalry) left Jhansi for the south.¹³² They returned after a week when Lalu Bakshi leading a detachment of 2,000 men encamped at Pichhor to check the advance of British troops.¹³³ Small bands of soldiers were sent to Rath, Panwari in Hamirpur and Mau in Jhansi. The zamindars of Mau were informed by Tantya Topi that on the 16th of February, he would halt in their village. They were to make provisions for 25,000 men and four batteries. But if they failed, they would be punished.¹³⁴

British entry into Bundelkhand was now certain. Under the impression that the British army would enter through the Pass of Narhat, the road leading to it was strongly barricaded. Hugh Rose, however, diverted towards the Pass of Madanpur, attacking it on the 3rd of March before the forces from Narhat could reach it. Madanpur was defended by soldiers of the 52nd and of other regiments alongwith 7,000 Bundelas. But they were overpowered and repulsed by the British forces.¹³⁵ Another brigade sent under the command of Brig. C.A. Stuart

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131. Trans. of a letter from Tantya Topi To the Peshwa Sahab, Chikhari, 10th Feb. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.635 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 264-266.
132. Abstract of Intelligence, 7th Feb. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 26th March 1858, Nos. 41-42 (N.A.I.) F.S.U.P., pp. 222-223.
133. Abstract of Intelligence from Datia, 13th Feb. 1858. For Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, Nos. 130-133 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p. 224.
134. Abstract of Intelligence from Tehri, 11th Feb. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, Nos.130-133 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 251-254.
135. From Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose To Maj.Gen. Mansfield, Chief of the Staff, Kanpur, Camp near Jhansi, 26th March 1858. Govt. Gazette, N.W.Provs. Vol.I, No.XV, Allahabad, Tuesday, June 1, 1858, pp.154-160. F.S.U.P., pp. 302-305.

captured the fort of Chanderi on the 17th of March.¹³⁶ The way was now cleared for the British march towards Jhansi.

Forces under Tantya Topi moved west from Chirkhari. Occupying Mau Ranipur and Burwa Sagar, they intended to march on Orchha.¹³⁷ A number of surrounding villages were plundered by them. In the wake of the impending British attack on Jhansi, the forces under Tantya Topi seemed unable to decide whether to attack Tehri or relieve Jhansi. The sepoys proposed that they should attack Orchha which would prevent reinforcements from reaching Jhansi. Others suggested marching to Jhansi.¹³⁸ The force was about 25,000 large but the number of regular sepoys were not more than 2,000. They had 27 guns including an English 18 pounder.¹³⁹

In Jhansi, soldiers deserting after every British victory, assembled. Faced with a crisis, Lalu Bakshi and Kashinath Hari advised Laxmi Bai to come to terms with the English while Mama Sahib and Gangadhar Bhaia insisted on resistance.¹⁴⁰ The soldiers refused any reconciliation with the English. Hasan Ali Khan Risaladar and other military

136. From C.A.Stuart, Brig. Commdg. 1st Brigade Central India Field Force To the Asstt. Adjutant General, C.I.F.F. Camp Masjid Ghat enroute to Jhansi, 21st March 1858 along with 4 enclosures. For. Pol. Progs. 10th Sept. 1858, No.25 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 266-276.

137. From R. Hamilton To G.F.Edmonstone, Camp. Bhiloni, 12th March 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 30th April 1858, No.137 (N.A.I.).

138. Abstract of Intelligence 26th March - 31st March 1858. For.Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No.127 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 305-306.

139. Ibid; Telegraphic Message from G.F.Edmonstone, Allaha-bad To E.A.Reade, Agra, 2nd April 1858. Original Telegrams sent to Mr.E.A.Reade, 1858 (U.P.S.A.I.).

140. Abstract of Intelligence, Jhansi, 13th March - 16th March 1858, For.Sec.Cons. 30th April 1858, No.147 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 289-291.

officers sent representations to Laxmi Bai's officials to the effect that if the Rani did not intend fighting the English they should be relieved of service and their arrears of pay met.¹⁴¹

Hugh Rose, however, allowed little time for deliberation as he marched at the head of the Central India Field Force on Jhansi and besieged the city on the 21st of March. The assault began on the 26th but the defence proved too strong to be easily overpowered. Meanwhile, Tantia Topi with his entire force marched towards Jhansi, intending to attack the besieging army from the rear. Its main body arrived at Burwa Sagar on the 30th and the next day crossed the river Betwa and after sunset took up a position in order of battle opposite the rear of an English Camp. They lit an immense bonfire on a rising ground as a signal to Jhansi, announcing their arrival. It was answered by salvos from all the batteries of the city and shouts of joy from their defenders. The battle began on the 1st morning. Serious combats took place between the British and the rebels, the latter fighting hard and with dexterity. They were eventually defeated by Rose's army but could not be completely routed.¹⁴² During the confrontation, the garrisons at Jhansi manned the walls and kept up a rapid fire from all their guns. After their defeat, the rebel force split into two, one made

141. Abstract of Intelligence, Alipura, 16th March 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, No.147 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., pp. 295-297.

142. From Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose To the Chief of the Staff, Camp. Pooch, 30th April 1858. Govt. Gazette, N.W.Provs. Vol.I, No.XXII, Allahabad, Tuesday, July 20, 1858, pp. 321-328. F.S.U.P., pp. 309-313.

for Kalpi and the other returned to Mau Ranipur.¹⁴³

Rose now turned to Jhansi. The British force entered the town on the 3rd of April and occupied it the next day. All the defending soldiers retreated into the fort which the English captured after a hard battle on the 5th. By the 6th Jhansi was in English control. The English authority had returned.

The fort of Jhansi and its defenders offered the English stiff resistance. There were about 10,000 Bundels and Vilaities, 1,500 Sepoys including 400 cavalry troops with 30 to 40 guns, in defence of the city and fort. The fort of Jhansi had a natural line of defence reinforced by arrangements made by the soldiers. A tower called the 'white turret' was raised in height and armed heavily and a number of batteries were set up in different strategic points at the fort. From all of them a constant fire was maintained. Narrating the operations at Jhansi, Hugh Rose remarked, "Everything indicated a general and determined resistance". "The Chief of the Rebel Artillery was a first rate Artillery man; he had under him two companies of Golundauze. The manner in which the Rebels served their guns, repaired their defences, and reopened fire from Batteries and guns repeatedly shut up, was remarkable. From some Batteries they returned shot for shot. The women were seen working in the Batteries and carrying ammunition. The garden Battery was fought under the black Flag of

143. From J.W.Pinkney, Suptd. of Jhansi To W.Muir, Secy. to the Govt. of the N.W.P. Camp. Jhansi, 7th April 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 15th Oct. 1858. No.58 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., pp. 322-325.

the Fakeers".¹⁴⁴ It was after the English captured the palace and town that the mutineers lost heart and Laxmi Bai's escape on the 4th night marked the beginning of retreat. Stray episodes marked the general feeling that animated the people in Jhansi. A retainer of the Rani tried to blow himself and his wife up, on the English occupying the palace. Failing in this attempt, he cut her to pieces and then killed himself. Two Afghan mercenaries when attacked, threw a woman who was with them into a well and then jumped in themselves.¹⁴⁵ Of the officials, Lalu Bakshi and Maru Balwant, Laxmi Bai's father were captured. The latter was hanged on the 19th of April at Jhokun Bagh.¹⁴⁶

Reverses at the hands of the English, temporarily dislocated the rebel forces. They dispersed in small bands in various directions. Tantya Topi went to Bhandere north-west of Jhansi close to the borders of this district and the Datia State, while others reached Gursairi. The ultimate objective of all was to assemble at Kalpi that was to offer the last diehard resistance to the English army. Kalpi now received a large contingent of soldiers who prepared to arrange for the defence of the place. All roads around Kalpi to a distance of one mile from Chowrasi Gombuz to the bank of the Jamuna were destroyed and ditches and trenches were dug along them to obstruct the progress of the British march. Posts

144. From Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose. To the Chief of the Staff, Camp Moth, 30th April 1858, Forrest, Selections from State Papers, Vol.IV, Central India, pp. 39-50. F.S.U.P., pp. 325-336.

145. Ibid.

146. From Newswriter at Jhansi, 6th April 1858 & From R. Hamilton To G.F.Edmonstone, 20th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No.143 (N.A.I).

with 200 men each were put in different corners - five posts on the east and south corner, two on the west, four on the north towards Jamuna and two on the east, tightly fortified the town and fort of Kalpi. Sowars patrolled around all night and no one was allowed to enter or leave the place without being thoroughly searched. The rebels collected 200 boats at different ghats. The total strength of the soldiers in Kalpi before Tantiya Topi joined them was roughly 10,000 men - 2,000 sepoys and 4,000 new levies, besides others. They were armed with 15 large and small guns.¹⁴⁷ Tantiya Topi and Laxmi Bai with their forces reached Kalpi in the second week of April, to be shortly joined by the Rajas of Banpur and Shahghar.¹⁴⁸

Hugh Rose left Jhansi for Kalpi on the 26th of April. For the defence of Kalpi, an advance guard was arranged at Kunch, 23 miles south west of the town on the road of Jalaun. 10,000 soldiers with 12 guns, with Tantiya Topi and Laxmi Bai, entrenched themselves at Kunch, determined to prevent Rose reaching Kalpi.¹⁴⁹

Meanwhile, in the east the British forces had made a decisive entry into Banda under the command of Gen. Whitlock. They won a major victory at Bhowraghar on the 19th of April

147. Abstract of Intelligence, 9th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858. No.128 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 352-356.

148. Abstract of Intelligence, 15th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, Nos.134-135. (N.A.I).

149. Intelligence dated 1st May 1858, News of 27th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858. Nos.82-83 (N.A.I); From Capt. F.W.Pinkney To W.Muir, Secy. to Govt. of N.W.P. 30th April 1858. For. Sec.Cons. 28th May 1858, No.68 (N.A.I).

and the defence of Ali Bahadur and his army collapsed. About three of four thousand soldiers escaped to Kalpi.¹⁵⁰

As a final touch to the defences of the last stand of rebellion, Nana Sahib issued fresh parwanas Arzees and proclamations to various people including some brahmins in the Deccan, the thakurs of Kuchwahaghar and all the Chiefs of Bundelkhand seeking help and co-operation in defence of religion.¹⁵¹ The major difference between these proclamations and the ones issued earlier lay in the dissimilar contexts in which the two were written. The former were calls for lending support to a cause and thereby to strengthen the forces of rebellion in their forthcoming struggle with the English. When Nana Sahib sent the second set of appeals, the jehad (war for religion) had not only begun and run quite a bit of its course but had suffered defeat and faced a crisis. The imperative need was to gather together

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150. From the Tahsildar of Banda To G.F. Edmonstone, 23rd 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No.485 (N.A.I), From F.W. Pinkney To W. Muir, 30th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No.68 (N.A.I.).
151. Trans. of Proclamation issued to all the Brahmins (of the Deccan) requesting their cooperation in defending their faith, Kalpi, 11th April, 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.651 (N.A.I); Letter to Radha Kishan Chowbey, 17th April 1858 & Trans. of an engagement entered into by Radha Kishan Chowbey, 17th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.649 (N.A.I); Letter to all the Chiefs & Talukdars of Kuchwahagar, Kalpi, 17th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.649 (N.A.I); Trans. of the Proclamation issued by Srimant Peshwa Bahadur, n.d. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.652 (N.A.I); Abstract Trans. of the Arzis, Parwanas etc. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.654 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 365-368.

all the energies possible. Appeals were now made to a wider cross-section of people for assistance. But such assistance and aid were categorically specified and every category priced and tagged. They were more in the nature of a catalogue of demands placed on different sections of the population, to be paid back in accordance to their worth. Although the source of legitimacy was still derived from religion, the religious and ideological idioms were to some extent, sidetracked by the emphasis on more tangible allurements and threats for active support or non-support to the cause of insurgency. Nana's letter to all the Zamindars, Chiefs, merchants, bankers and dealers in Sugar ran as follows :

"... whoever amongst the Zamindars shall join me, accompanied by his men with provisions for them and ammunition, will receive credit for the price of those articles in the accounts relative in the revenue of his Zamindari, and also a remission of the whole of the revenue for two years, and afterwards of 4 annas in the Rupee per annum for 8 years. That whoever amongst the Zamindars shall afford me aid, only in grain, bean etc. as well as in balls, bullets and gunpowder, will obtain credit for the same in the accounts relating to the revenue of his Zamindari, and a remission of the rent for one year, and afterwards of 4 annas in the Rupee for four years":

The threat followed,

"... whoever amongst the Zamindars from a feeling of regard for the English upon whom the wrath of God has fallen for their evil intention of converting Hindoos and Mahomedans to Christianity shall hesitate to render services to the Sirkar or shall oppose, or desert it, or shall not procure supplies will be visited with due punishment."

Similar incentives and threats of chastisement were extended to Khundsaris (dealers in sugar) and bankers. They would receive Khillats and Sanads (certificates) for their good conduct.

"These certificates will contribute to the exaltation of their dignity and honour in the estimation of their compeers". For every one lac of rupees offered, bankers would get an interest of 2 per cent till the principal was liquidated, 1.1/2 p.c. for fifty thousand deposited and 1 p.c. for every twenty-five thousand. That was the minimum amount the Sirkar (government) would receive as credit.¹⁵²

Rose attacked Kunch on the 7th of May. In spite of strong entrenchments that the defending forces threw around the town, they could not combat the flank movement of the British army which occupied the town and the old fort after an hour's fighting.¹⁵³ The rebels now fell back on Kalpi, the last bastion of their strength and defence. Marching through Orai and Attah, the first brigade of the Central India Field force arrived and encamped on the right bank of the Jamuna on the 15th, taking up a position about 4 miles below the fort of Kalpi. The 2nd brigade reached the following day. Another column under Brig Maxwell was to take up grounds across the Jamuna and on the 18th, Col. Riddell with the Etawah column marched South from Etawah.¹⁵⁴

The rebel force was composed of the Gwalior contingent, one of the best drilled and organised regiments, troops from the different states in Central India, several mutinous

152. Trans. of the Proclamation issued by Srimant Peshwa Bahadur. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No. 652 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 360-361.

153. Intelligence of 2nd May, 5th May & 9th May. For. Sec. Progs. 28th May 1858, Nos. 70-71 (N.A.I).

154. From R. Hamilton To G.F. Edmonstone, Guladie, 17th May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858, No. 89. (N.A.I).

Bengal Infantry Regiments such as the 52nd, cavalry troopers from Kotah, a chosen band of vilaities and a force of the Nawab of Banda comprising of a large number of cavalry of which the 5th Irregulars, dressed in their red uniforms, formed a part. Kalpi was the best fortified stronghold in Central and Western India, containing perhaps the only arsenal full of stores and ammunition.¹⁵⁵ The fort had a subterraneous Magazine and four foundaries for making cannons.¹⁵⁶ Under the leadership of Tantiya Topi, Rao Sahib, Nana's nephew, Laxmi Bai and Ali Bahadur, the force entrenched in Kalpi was unusually strong. The regiments retained English equipments and forms of organisation. Infact, even the words of command for drill, grand rounds were given in English.¹⁵⁷

Rebel occupation of Kalpi prevented the British armies of the west and the east to combine and also exposed to attack armies engaged in operations in the Doab, along the Ganges, in Awadh and Rohilkhand.¹⁵⁸ Kalpi was thus a crucial centre of power that rebellion wished to defend and authority was determined to usurp.

Soon after the battle of Kunch, Tantiya Topi, the astute strategist secretly escaped to Gwalior. With the

155. From Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose To Maj. Gen. W.H.Mansfield, Gwalior, 22nd June 1858. Forrest, Selections from State Papers, Vol.IV. pp. 82-103. F.S.U.P., pp. 387-405.

156. Further Papers relative to the Mutinies (No.8), Inclosure 8 in No.17. p.163. Telegraphic message from H. Rose To the Secy. to the Govt. with the Govt. Gen, Kalpi, 26th May 1858.

157. Forrest, Selections from State Papers, op.cit. From Rose to Mansfield, 22nd June 1858. F.S.U.P., pp. 387-405.

158. Ibid.

purpose of mobilising the Mahratha and Gwalior divisions of the Scindia's army, he wished to form a second line of defence there. Once the army mutinied, the Scindia would give in and once he did so, most of the Princes in Central India would be inspired to resist the English march.

The force in Kalpi was thus left at the command of Rao Sahib, Nana's nephew. Rao Sahib posted troops on all the three roads of approach to Kalpi. He himself held the chowk (crossing) on the Kunch road, with 1,500 Infantry, 4 guns and 600 Horse mostly of the 5th Irregular cavalry, while the 32nd Native Infantry with 2 guns held the Jalalpur road, and 700 Vilaities and one gun stood on the road from Jalaun. The Gwalior contingent, 2,000 strong, garrisoned Kalpi.

Hugh Rose, however, left these roads to his left and moved on to village Golowlie upon the Jamuna and concentrated his army there on the 19th of May.¹⁵⁹ The final contest began on the 22nd. The soldiers at Kalpi decided the day before, to attack the British position at Golowlie at 8, the following morning. They swore on the waters of Jamuna that they would drive the British force into the river or die. After defeating the English at Kalpi, they intended to move against Whitlock's army in the south. Opium was distributed among the troops, in anticipation of the desperate struggle.¹⁶⁰ The assault began as decided, with :

159. Report on the Affairs of Gwalior from the 24th of May to the 20th of June 1858 sent by S.C. Macpherson, Pol. Agent, Gwalior, 30th Sept. 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858. Nos. 4281-83 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 444-466.

160. Forrest, Selections from State Papers, op.cit. From Rose to Mansfield, 22nd June 1858. F.S.U.P., pp. 387-405.

grim determination. The English suffered initial setback but finally routed the rebels. At the same time, British batteries across the Jamuna opened fire on the fort of Kalpi, the same day.¹⁶¹ The defeat at Gulowlie proved disastrous for the rebels. They had put in all their resources for the assault and on being repulsed, were easily overpowered by the British forces. Rose advanced on the town on the 23rd. The defenders continued to attack, pressing on boldly under cover of ravines. But all their determination and dogged resistance failed to contain the British army. Rose entered the town on the 23rd and the soldiers fled in disorderly bands. Rose found the fort evacuated. The rebels were pursued for some time but most of them were able to cross over, into Gwalior. Tant ya Topi had left Kalpi some days before the battle, the other leaders left during or immediately after it.¹⁶² Thus was sounded the death knell of organised rebellion that the soldiers in Jhansi began, in Bundelkhand. As far as this division was concerned, the mutiny and the concerted efforts to resist the English in 1857, had ended.

The soldiers and their leaders rushed westwards as had been already decided. They occupied the fort of Gwalior on the 1st of June, Scindia's soldiers offering them little or

161. Telegraphic message from H. Rose To the Secy. to the Govt. with the Gov. Gen., Kalpi, 26th May 1858. Further Papers (No.8) relative in the Mutinies in the East Indies, p. 163.

162. From R. Hamilton, To G.F. Edmonstone, Kalpi, 24th May 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 10th Sept. 1858, No.103 (N.A.I), F.S.U.P., pp. 380-382.

no resistance. But the British army was in close pursuit. They entered Gwalior in two columns and the battle over the city began on the 16th. By the 19th of June, all was over. The British forces had won.¹⁶³

3.5 The postscript.

The rebels under Tantiya Topi, Rao Sahib and Ali Bahadur fleeing south-wards from Gwalior launched the last lap of their struggle, marked by flight, pursuit, defeat, dispersal and flight again. They broke into three divisions, the first led by Tantiya Topi and Rao Sahib, the second constituted by the Gwalior contingent and the third under the Nawab of Banda.¹⁶⁴ They first headed west towards Jaipur in Rajasthan, then broke south, crossed this division and entered Central India, again moving South east in the direction of Bhopal. Tantiya Topi reentered Bundelkhand crossing the Betwa and marching towards Lalitpur and Tehri. He occupied Lalitpur on the 16th of October 1858 and plundered it.¹⁶⁵ But pursuit of British forces once again forced him to cross the Betwa and make for the Deccan. Entering Hoshangabad, he was pushed westwards reaching Chota Udaipur close to Baroda. From there he once again headed northwards

163. Report on the Affairs of Gwalior from the 24th of May to the 20th of June 1858 by S.C.Macpherson, 30th Sept. 1858. For. Pol.Cons. 31st Dec. 1858. Nos. 4281-83, F.S.U.P., pp. 444-466.

164. Message from E.A.Reade, Agra, 26th June 1858. Original of daily bulletins issued by Mr.E.A.Reade during March-July 1858 (U.P.S.A.L) F.S.U.P., p. 471.

165. Abstract of Intelligence, Jhansi, 16th Oct. 1858. For. Dept. Abstract, N.W.P. Imperial Record Dept. "Narrative of Events for the week ending 16th Oct. 1858. (U.P.S.A.L) F.S.U.P., p. 516.

via Banswara to Zirapur South of Kotah. At Zirapur, his forces suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the British on the 29th December.¹⁶⁶ But the intrepid soldier resumed his march. Tantiya Topi was finally apprehended at a village called Mohudia close to Sironj on the 7th of April 1859. His hide-out was given away by Raja Man Singh who had been caught earlier.¹⁶⁷ He was court martialled on the 15th of April and on charges of rebellion sentenced to death.¹⁶⁸

This was how mutiny of the soldiers in Bundelkhand drew to an end. From its inception to the end it remained essentially urban in character. It concentrated on attempts to establish links with neighbouring towns and centres of power, with the ultimate object of converging all under one common political capital. Their endeavour to do so, forced the soldiers to move out of their respective stations. Thus a constant mobility marked their rebellion as all tried to reach Delhi or other focal point. The political vision of the mutinies attracted and absorbed the protests of varied sections of people. All government officials ranging from the chaprasi to the deputy Collector joined in with the soldiers in building an alternate order. Therefore, what began as a mutiny of soldiers gradually developed into a movement that encompassed

166. From A.R.E. Hutchinson, Bheel Agent & Pol. Asstt. Agent Gov.Gen. To R.Hamilton, Camp. Zirapur, 30th Dec. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 14th March 1858. No.332 & 524 of 1858 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 551-554.

167. From Maj. R.Meade, 8th April 1859. For. Pol. Progs. 22nd April 1859. Nos. 155-56. (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 560-564.

168. Sen, op.cit., p. 378.

varied strands of protests. The study of the mutiny thus cannot stop at the uprising of the soldiers. An inquiry into its evolution and development needed to take cognisance of all the strands that it picked in the career of its progress as a movement.

The example of resistance that the soldiers set early in June 1857, left a more enduring effect. It was taken up by the people of Bundelkhand; rebellion and resistance here continued long after the last gun shot of the sepoys had been silenced.

CHAPTER IV.

The Revolt and the Rajas of Bundelkhand.

In most accounts on the revolt of 1857 in Bundelkhand, Jhansi and her much-mythified Rani, Laxmi Bai claim the focus of attention. The movement appeared to have centred on and around Jhansi, with its course determined by the actions of the Rani. "Proud unbending uncompromising" and even "licentious",¹ in the eyes of the British, Laxmi Bai turned a martyr, an example of undying patriotism, 'the Indian Joan of Arc',² at the hands of Indian writers and historians. Whether maligned or romanticised, the Rani and her actions constitute one of the most oft-repeated annals in the story of rebellion in 1857-58.

Yet, Jhansi was one among several such small kingdoms and principalities that lay dispersed throughout Bundelkhand and much of Central India. Laxmi Bai as its Rani had company in many rulers and Chiefs who cherished memories and traditions of independent rule. Whether left intact or appropriated, all these states had to contend with British rule and ultimately acknowledge its paramountcy. The outbreak and spread of mutiny and rebellion

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1. T. Lowe, Central India during the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858 (London, 1860), p.236; G.W.Forrest, A History of the Indian Mutiny, Vol.III(London, 1904-1912) p. 282 cf. S.N.Sen, Eighteen Fifty-seven (Delhi-1957), p. 296.
 2. S.N.Sinha, The Revolt of 1857 in Bundelkhand (Anuj Publications, Lucknow, 1982), p.157. Sinha writes, "Rani Lakshmi Bai occupies a very high place not only among the leaders of the Revolt of 1857 but also among those who have sacrificed their life for the freedom of their motherland. She has every claim to be called the Indian Joan of Arc or the Indian Boadicea".

in 1857 was followed by the overthrow of British administration in all the districts of Bundelkhand. In such a situation of political vacuum, the local potentates were driven into action, anticipating their roles in the uprising. Their initial response and later actions were determined as much by their own perceptions and understanding of the situation around them as by forces playing on them.

Interestingly, no other section of the population in Bundelkhand evoked more contradicting opinions about their roles in the revolt of 1857-58 as these regional power-holders. Their actions defied a straight-laced pattern and therefore cannot be measured in terms of either of the two opposing denominators - rebel or loyal. In most instances, these local Rajas were not arbiters of the situation in 1857-58. They were actors in the context they found themselves in, and in their perception, the context was determined by the strength of the two forces of authority and rebellion. The outbreak of revolt leading to the expulsion of British rule, and the suppression of revolt enabling the reassertion of British authority, were the twin phenomena that decided the course of the movement of these Chiefs.

Rebellion appropriated British authority in all the four districts of Bundelkhand by June 1857. Nowhere did the potentates have anything to do with the upsurge in the face of which British rule collapsed. The first instance of

rebellion occurred in Bundelkhand when the soldiers of 12th Native Infantry mutinied in Jhansi on the 5th of June. Three days later, all the English officials were killed. An uprising of ~~thakurs~~ followed by a mutiny of soldiers next expelled British administration in Chanderi. The English evacuated the station on the 12th of June. On the 14th of June the 1st Native Infantry rose in Banda and the officials fled from the station. The same day, Hamirpur witnessed a similar mutiny among soldiers of the 56th Regiment. Here all the Europeans were put to death. Although no mutiny or rebellion took place in Orai, the capital of Jalaun, the English alarmed by news of widespread revolt, left the district between the 11th and the 15th of June. By the middle of June, therefore, British rule in Bundelkhand had been replaced.³

The regional powerholders were first called upon to act while insurgency was raging in the towns and before the English had been expelled or killed. However, this situation of rebellion confronted only four of those magnates who were closest to the scene of actions. Rani Laxmi Bai lived in Jhansi and Nawab Ali Bahadur in Banda, while the principalities of the Raja of Banpur and the Chief of Gurserai lay very close to the two district towns of Lalitpur and Orai. The first two were actually present when the rebellion broke out, the last two were asked by the British officials to come to the district towns. It was these four rulers who were the first to be forced to confront the situation and respond to it. The others who were away from

3. Cf. Chapter III.

later
these towns reacted/in the movement.

Proximity and immediacy of both rebellion and the overthrow of British rule decided the first move that the Rajas took in the rebellion of 1857-58. The time and space of the beginning of the movement of the Rajas were in short, determined by the forces of rebellion and authority.

The initial response of these powerholders to the movement was largely made under compulsion. In the prevailing insurrectionary situation, both the rebels and the retreating officials found in these Chiefs a common alternative to the vacuum that the overthrow of British rule created. For the power that they symbolised and the resources, however meagre, that they commanded, these regional magnates turned important in June 1857. They were entrusted both by rebellion its acquired powers and by the British their jeopardised authority. In the roles that were thrust upon them by the forces of rebellion and counter-rebellion, they made their initial moves - cautious and hesitant.

4.1. Laxmi Bai of Jhansi.

The soldiers in Jhansi mutinied without the knowledge of the Rani of Jhansi.⁴ However, soon after rising, the soldiers went to the palace of the Rani"... with loaded

4. From Robert Hamilton, Agent. G.G. for Central India, to G.F. Edmonstone. Secy. to the Govt. of India with the G.G. Camp Jhansi, 24th April 1858. For. Pol. Procs. 30th Dec. 1859. No.280-88(N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p.16. Hamilton refers to F.D. Gordon's letter written on the 6th of June 1857 where the Deputy Superintendent of Jhansi made 'no allusion' to the Rani or her men.

guns and demanded assistance and supplies. She was obliged to yield, and to furnish guns, ammunition and supplies".⁵ On the other hand, the English officials, reposing trust and hope in the erstwhile Queen, repeatedly sent urgent messages to her for assistance. Forced to take shelter in the fort, the British asked the Rani for four elephants.⁶ They were not sent. The officials learnt that the soldiers had met the Rani and asked her to post her sepoy around the Fort so that those besieged would not be able to come out.⁷ The English, however, continued to write letters to Laxmi Bai, most of which never reached her. As the situation got ominous for the former, they sent a certain person called Andrews in the guise of an Indian to meet the Rani. The man was recognised by the sepoy and killed.⁸ Meanwhile Laxmi Bai was said to have written to F.D.Gordon, the Deputy Collector, that she had been forced to send the soldiers, guns and some of her men in order to save herself from their retribution.⁹ The pressure of the mutineers on the Rani continued

5. Abstract Translation of the statement of Aman Khan, a sepoy of the 8th Company 12th Regt. Bengal N.I., 14th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1858, Suppl. No.283 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 24-27.

6. Deposition of Sheikh Hingun Hookaburdar to Capt. F.D. Gordon, Dy. Commr. of Jhansi, 6th March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, No.286 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp.29-34.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., This is the only evidence which speaks of such a letter being written by Laxmi Bai to the English.

to mount. They threatened to kill her and set fire to her palace if she complied with Gordon's request for assistance. On the third day, after the uprising, the sepoys once again warned her of instant assassination if she refused to support them. Thereafter she supplied them with reinforcements of 1,000 men and two heavy guns which she ordered to be dug out from where they had laid buried for three years.¹⁰

Laxmi Bai was considerably constrained by the fact that her soldiers and retainers joined the rebellion, soon after its outbreak. The soldiers were able to enter the city of Jhansi because " ... sepoys in the service of the Ranee got a black-smith who broke open the lock".¹¹ On the insurgency breaking out, Laxmi Bai put guards at her gate and shut herself in her palace. The guards joined the mutineers.¹² Rani's sepoys actively participated in the combat between the besieged Europeans and the rebellious soldiers.¹³ They killed Andrews on discovering his disguise.¹⁴ Finally they were present at Jokhun Bagh when the Europeans were put to sword. According to one deposition, "when Europeans arrived at the Jhokun Bagh, all men, women and children were killed

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10. G.W.Forrest, Selections from the State Papers, Vol.IV. Appendix A, pp. V-VIII (Calcutta, 1912), Written Deposition of a native of Bengal. F.S.U.P., pp. 44-46.
 11. Trans. of the statement of Bhugwan Brahmin, son of Bukha aged 29, Resident of Cawnpore Dist. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, No.284 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P, p. 28.
 12. Forrest, op.cit., Deposition of a native of Bengal. F.S.U.P. pp. 44-46.
 13. Deposition of Sheikh Hingun Hookaburdar to Capt. F.D. Gordon, Dy. Commr. of Jhansi, 6th March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, No.286(N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp.29-34.
 14. Ibid.

with swords and spears by the Nujeebs and Ranee's sepoys by directions of the sepoys and sowars".¹⁵ As rebellion triumphed in Jhansi, its Rani came to be drawn more and more into its association.

In other regions too, local potentates were confronted with insurrectionary situations immediately after the outbreak of rebellion. However, they did not face the kind of pressure that the Rani of Jhansi did from the rebels, for assistance. Coming in the wake of the outbreak in Jhansi, rebellion in the other districts, overthrew British rule with greater ease. The precedence set at Jhansi presaged success for rebellion elsewhere. The soldiers were more confident, the English more defensive and less secure.

4.2. Mardan Singh of Banpur.

The British brought the Rajas in Chanderi, Banda and Jalaun to the forefront of events. Mardan Singh, ruler of Banpur was asked by Hamilton, the Deputy Superintendent of Chanderi to come to Lalitpur, the district town and assist the British in quelling the widespread thakur disaffection. This the Raja did.¹⁶ However, the rebellion of Bundela Rajputs continued unabated. Collecting in large numbers, they surrounded Lalitpur and two thanas at Chanderi and Talbehat. British officials in Lalitpur began to feel increasingly

15. Ibid.

16. From Lt. A.C. Gordon Dy. Commr. of Chundeyree To The Commr. of Saugor & Nurbudda Territories, Jubbulpoor, 9th June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No. 237 (N.A.I).

uneasy and distressed. Hamilton's successor A.C.Gordon suspected Mardan Singh of supporting the rebellion of thakurs if not being one of their chief accomplice. "The Raja of Banpur is I am convinced at their (the thakurs) head and is only waiting for some further intelligence to join the rebels ...", Gordon wrote to W.C.Erskine, Commissioner, Sagar Division on the 10th of June.¹⁷ As Chief of the senior branch of Bundela Rajputs, Mardan Singh's links with the other Bundelas who had risen in arms, was assumed by Gordon. "It is well known that he is playing a double game and his presence here has created quite a panic among the inhabitants of the Bazaar, and also among the servants of Government, ..." ¹⁸ Gordon further claimed that the Raja had been secretly conferring with the sepoys in order to 'demoralize' them.¹⁹ Impelled by his fear, the Deputy Commissioner ordered Mardan Singh to return to Banpur and keep that area 'in order'.²⁰ The Raja did not go back to Banpur but stopped at one of his forts in Mussowrah, about 4 miles from Lalitpur. Here, Gordon later reported, the Raja collected a large force of Bundelas and some guns. Despite the Deputy Commissioner's instructions to the contrary, Mardan Singh was said to have sent a force with couple of guns to Chanderi.²¹

17. From Lt. A.C.Gordon, To The Commr., Jubbulpoor, 10th June, 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.237 (N.A.I.).

18. Ibid.

19. From Lt. A.C.Gordon, To Maj. Erskine, Commr. Sagar Dvn. Camp. Sagar, 17th Sept. 1857, For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.237 (N.A.I.).

20. This term is used repeatedly in English reports.

21. From Gordon, To Erskine, 17th Sept., 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.237 (N.A.I.).

However, the Raja of Banpur had not committed any overt act of rebellion as Gordon himself admitted. On the contrary, he professed that he would perform any service required of him by the British even if put to considerable expense.²²

Despite his misgivings about Mardan Singh, Gordon before evacuating the station of the 12th of June, handed over the charge of the district to the Raja of Banpur and issued a Parwana to that effect. He hoped that the Raja would be able to " .. save Government property and protect the District and people from being plundered ...",²³ till such time as British rule was reestablished.

It does not appear that Mardan Singh had been among those Rajputs who were up in arms against the British. Yet, as a leading member of the Bundela clan, he symbolised a power that could be identified with the forces of rebellion and at the same time replace authority. Gordon alleged that Mardan Singh was playing a double game and that his presence in Lalitpur created a 'panic'. On the other hand, the residents of the bazar in Lalitpur intimidated by the prevailing situation left their homes and took refuge²⁴ in Banpur; and the Deputy Commissioner finally entrusted Mardan Singh with

22. From Gordon, To the Commr. S. & N. Terr. 19th June, 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No. 237 (N.A.I.).

23. From Gordon, To Erskine, 17th Sept., 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No. 237 (N.A.I.).

24. Ibid.

the administration of Chanderi. Authority was thrust upon him by the British and as the latter gave way, Mardan Singh was left with only the Bundelas to perpetuate his ascribed role.

4.3. Ali Bahadur of Banda.

In Banda too, the English officials sensing early signs of danger, sought protection from Nawab Ali Bahadur. The European women were sent to the Nawab's palace to be followed shortly after, by the men. Ali Bahadur did all he could to provide the English with the much needed shelter.²⁵ But the Nawab's 'followers', over whom he had little control were averse to the presence of the foreigners from the very beginning.²⁶

On the soldiers of the 1st Native Infantry revolting in Banda, the officials decided to retrieve the situation with the help of the Nawab and his hundred and twenty-five soldiers. But these soldiers when assembled broke out into mutiny, marched to the cantonments of the 1st Native Infantry, singing Jehad and calling upon all Muslims to exterminate the foreigners.²⁷ Regarding Ali Bahadur, however, Mayne wrote "I ... must bear witness that nothing could have been better than the behaviour of the Nawab and his Moosahibs

25. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the District of Banda 1857-58. Part I. From F.O. Mayne, Magt. & Coll. of Banda to C. Chester, Commr. Allahabad Dvn. 11th Sept. 1857, para 17, p.318.

26. Ibid.

27. Cf. Chapter III.

upto that time." ²⁸ Rebellion overpowered the British and the Nawab. The former left while latter remained to contend with it.

4.4. Kesho Rao of Gurserai.

British authority in Jalaun was in its last leg of defence in the wake of widespread rebellion all around the district by the end of the first week of June. Browne, the Deputy Commissioner wrote to Kesho Rao, the Rais or Chief of Gurserai to come to Orai and help him to keep the district under control. Kesho Rao met Browne at the town of Jalaun on the 10th of June. The Chief had with him some five to six hundred Infantry and Cavalry soldiers. Browne wanted Kesho Rao to assist the district officials with his soldiers and to send some of his force to Kunch, Orai and Kalpi. ²⁹ The Deputy Commissioner later wrote, "The Chief professed the utmost readiness to assist the Government, and said that he had always been a loyal subject and would continue so". ³⁰ He, however, asked Browne for a letter authorising him to assist the Government officials. Browne later recalled having addressed such a letter to the Chief, requesting him to assist the Government in keeping the district quiet. But on no account was the Chief to interfere in the official work or to act independently. ³¹

28. N.E., Banda Part I, para 20, p. 319.

29. Further papers (No.7) relative to The Mutinies in the East Indies, Inclosure 34 in No.8, pp. 155-6. Parl. Papers, H.C., Vol.44, Pt. III, 1857-58.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

On returning to Orai, the Deputy Commissioner learnt from the Tahsildar of Jalaun, that the Gurserai Chief had turned out all the Government officials and police from the Fort of Jalaun and had occupied it with his own men, declaring that he was henceforth the Governor of the district. The Tahsildar sent Browne a copy of the letter that Kesho Rao claimed to have received from the Deputy Commissioner. It read that the entire management of Jalaun had been relinquished to the Rais of Gurserai and that the latter was to be considered the ruler. Browne claimed that the writer was bribed by the Chief to distort the meaning of the contents of his letter. Browne wrote to Kesho Rao reminding him of the limits of his authority but the latter did not reply back.³² Soon after all the officials evacuated Jalaun.

4.5. In the aftermath of rebellion ...

The departure of the British found the Rajas in the task of constructing an alternate pattern of rule in their respective regions. They tried to come to grips with the political situation. The pervading atmosphere of rebellion and the physical presence of the mutineers, however, impinged on their independence. So long as the soldiers remained, the local potentates had to regard their power. It was only after the former left their respective stations, that the magnates gained some leeway for independent action.

The same evening that the English were killed in Jhansi, the soldiers sent out proclamations declaring "The People

32. Ibid.

are God's, the country is the King's (Padshah's), and the two religion govern".³³ They asked the Rani for 1,25,000 rupees as a price for the throne. She gave them 15,000 rupees.³⁴ The soldiers left Jhansi on the 11th of June.³⁵ Thereafter the Rani issued a second proclamation to the effect that the "Raj (Rule) is Lachmee Bai's".³⁶ She set up her flag on the fort, started working a mint and sent for mahajans to pay her 'nazrana' (money). She also brought out two concealed guns, one of which was kept with her and the other mounted on the fort.³⁷ At the same time, Laxmi Bai set out to raise soldiers. Aman Singh, who joined her service, later deposed before the English that the Rani enlisted about 100 men from the local inhabitants of Jhansi. They were armed and clothed with muskets and uniforms that the mutineers had left behind. 80 men from the 'Scindia's contingents, who had been disarmed and disbanded joined the Rani's forces, as did 300 Vilaities,, 500 mutineers and

33. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the Division of Jhansi in 1857-58, para 37, p. 513.

34. Trans. of the Deposition of Jamadar of Orderlies, Madar Bux attached to Capt. Gordon of Jhansi, 23rd March, 1858. For Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl., No.287 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 35-39.

35. N.E., Jhansi. para 40, p. 514.

36. Deposit of Madar Bux 23rd March, 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.287 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 35-39.

37. Deposition of Deokeenundun Lohar formerly orderly classy (sic) of the later Lt. Gordon of Jhansi, 11th March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No. 388 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 39-41.

500 Bundela cavalry soldiers. Zaminders furnished their quota of men as well. There were about 30,000 men in all both within the town and on outpost duties in the service of Laxmi Bai.³⁸

The Raja of Banpur moved into Lalitpur in the evening of 13th June with a large force and some guns. The soldiers of the 6th Regiment there, were preparing to proceed towards Jhansi. Mardan Singh attacked them and pursued them till they reached the river Betwa. On its banks, the Raja gave the soldiers a fight in which he lost about 250 men.³⁹

Mardan Singh gradually took possession of the greater part of Chanderi district.⁴⁰ He removed all the Government thanas in Chanderi and replaced them with his own people.⁴¹ According to the "Narrative of Events", compiled after the restoration of British power, Mardan Singh plundered all those who were supposed to have supported the English, extorted money from the trading classes, raised revenue and had established a canon foundary on European principles. All Indian district officials took service with the Raja of Banpur.⁴² There is a sole reference to the effect that the

38. Abstract Translation of the statement of Aman Khan, 14th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.283 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp: 24-27.

39. N.E., Jhansi, para 58, p.518 & para 70, pp. 520-21.

40. From Maj. W.C.Erskine, Commr. & Agent. Lt. Gov. Sagar Dvn. To G. Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India in the For. Dept. Jabalpur, 22nd June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 31st July 1857, No.329 (N.A.I).

41. Copy of a letter from Maj. Gaussen from Camp. Malthone to Brig. Sage, 16th June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.232 (N.A.I).

42. N.E., Jhansi, para 71, p. 521.

Raja had set all prisoners in the jail free and had armed them immediately after moving into Lalitpur.⁴³

British rule was formally declared to have terminated in Banda with the Nawab's proclamation issued on the 14th night - "Khulq Khoda ki, Mulk Badshah ka, Hukum Nawab Ali Bahadur ka". (The world is God's, the country is Emperor's, the rule is of Nawab Ali Bahadur) The Nawab announced that the Collector and Magistrate had entrusted the care of the district to him and that all the Government officials were to remain at their respective posts. Ali Bahadur acted without the soldier's consent. Incensed by his move, the soldiers issued a second proclamation the following day that the rule was that of the Subahdar Sepoy Bahadur. The Nawab thereafter, came to terms with the soldiers and acknowledged their authority.⁴⁴

So long as the soldiers remained in Banda, their authority remained undisputed. Dhowa, a chieftan of Ajaigarh staked his claims to the throne of Banda in the absence of the British. The soldiers, however, settled in favour of Ali Bahadur who was to be in charge of the district till the matter was referred to Nana Sahib at Bithur.⁴⁵ The soldiers finally left Banda on the 19th of June.

The following day, Ali Bahadur issued a fresh proclamation declaring his rule in the zilla of Banda as established

43. From Gaussen To Sage, 16th June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.232 (N.A.I).

44. N.E., Banda, Pt. II, para 6, p. 324. Cf. Chapter III.

45. Ibid.

from the 20th of Shawal Hizri, 1273 or the 13th of June 1857. It was told that people would be held responsible for all acts of murder, robbery or 'other injuries' taking place within their territory. They were also warned against formenting trouble outside their locality. In either instance, the houses in their villages would be destroyed and burnt down. They were promised protection and reward for assisting the 'sirkar' (government).⁴⁶

Offices were set up, finances organised police and revenue chaprassies who had been clamouring for their arrears of pay were taken into service, many on increased salaries. The Nawab also re-employed all his own soldiers. A council was formed comprising of the erstwhile British employees and some important citizens of Banda. The different members of the council took upon themselves the responsibility of different departments but all enjoyed a degree of independence that under ordinary circumstances the Nawab would never have allowed them. Muhammeden dates were introduced. Retaining more or less with minor changes, the structure of British administration, Nawab Ali Bahadur succeeded in establishing his rule in the precincts of the town of Banda. The people of the town and the officials attended on him and paid him nazars.⁴⁷

46. From Pol. Asstt. for Bundelkhand, To G.F. Edmonstone, 2nd Dec. 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 18th Dec. 1857, No. 185 (N.A.I).

47. N.E., Banda, Part II, para 10, p. 326. From R.R.W. Ellis, Pol. Asstt. for Bundelkhand, Nagode, 22nd June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 31st July 1857, No. 178 (N.A.I).

Kesho Rao in Jalaun followed in the footsteps of his counterparts in other districts. Continuing the structure of Government left behind by the British, he reemployed all the erstwhile officials. He set up a mint at Jalaun which became the centre of his administration and where he held his court. He collected revenue, levied contributions from all richmen in town and gave villages in jagirs to his supporters. He had some 300 men about him and was said to have sent to Gurserai carts full of the money he collected. Kesho Rao, it was later reported, intended to set one of his sons up as the Raja of Jalaun. However, fearing opposition from Tai Bai, the former Rani of Jalaun, whose claims were supported by a strong party of Jalaun pandits, he refrained from doing so.⁴⁸

An alternate rule of the Rajas was thus established to replace that of the British. The course of events that culminated into this change had overwhelmed the local potentates, who suddenly found themselves being brought to the political forefront. The change thus left them in a quandary. There was little to suggest to them at this stage that the change would stay or that the change could be made permanent. A sudden uprising of soldiers had created an immediate disruption, which the British would eventually correct.

48. From Maj. W.C.Erskine, To C. Beadon, Jabalpur, 5th July 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857, No. 350 (N.A.I); From Munshi Sheoprashad, To Lt. G. Browne, Kanpur, 26th Aug. 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch, 6th Nov. 1857. No. 18 (N.A.I); Narrative of Events in Jalaun District, 27th March 1858. From G. Passanah, Dy. Coll. & Dy. Magt. Jalaun To Maj. R.R.W.Ellis, Pol. Agent for Bundelkhand, Kanpur, para 12, p. 505.

Therefore, these rulers continued to maintain their links with the English, in whatever way they could. There was as yet no question of joining the rebellion or standing in support of authority. Till this time, they looked upon themselves more as repositories of responsibilities entrusted to them by the British than as being representatives of rebellion that intended to supersede the British.

While Laxmi Bai was trying to bring the situation under control in Jhansi, she wrote two letters to W.C. Erskine the Commissioner and Agent Lieutenant Governor of Sagar Division on the 12th and 14th of June respectively. In the first letter she explained how helpless she had been in face of the mutiny of soldiers. She had been forced by the mutineers to assist them. Affirming her total dependence on the English, she wrote that she had taken up the duties of governing Jhansi, in consideration of the welfare and protection of the people.⁴⁹

The second letter was a request for help from the British. Rebellion had taken over the entire district and the Rani was not being able to bring the country under her control and therefore earnestly needed reinforcements from the British.⁵⁰ This letter was accompanied by a narrative

49. Trans. of Khureeta of the Rani of Jhansi to the address of the Commr. and Agent Lt. Gov. Saugor Dvn. 12th June 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857, Pt. II, No.354 (N.A.I), F.S.U.P. pp. 65-66.

50. Trans. of Khureeta from the Rani of Jhansi to the address of the Commr. and Agent Lt. Gov., Saugor Dvn. 14th June 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857, Pt.II, No.354 (N.A.I), F.S.U.P. pp. 66-67.

of the events that took place in Jhansi since the 5th of June.⁵¹

Erskine sent his reply to both the letters on the 2nd of July. He asked the Rani to administer the district till such time as a new Superintendent arrived and took charge from her. She was to collect revenue, raise such police as was necessary and make other arrangements such as the Government approved. The Superintendent, the letter further said, on arriving would repay the Rani for all the expenses and losses she had incurred and 'deal liberally' with her. Erskine sent with his letter a proclamation with his seal and signature both in Hindi and Persian, announcing that the Rani would until further orders rule the district in the name of the British Government and calling on all to pay her revenue and obey her orders.⁵²

As the English officials were leaving Lalitpur on the 12th evening, they were surrounded at the end of the town by Mardan Singh's men and taken to the fort of Mussowrah, where they were treated well. On the 14th evening, Dulhari Lal, Mardan Singh's Vakil (prime minister) asked Gordon to sign on a paper which read that owing to the rebellion and mutiny, the British were forced to leave Lalitpur, that they

51. Trans. of Kharita detailing Narrative of Events which transpired in Jhansi on the 5th June 1857 about 1 p.m. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857, Pt.II, No.354 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 67-68.

52. Trans. of Khureeta from the Commr. Saugar Div. to the Ranee of Jhansi, 2nd July 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857, Pt.II, No.354 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 69-70.

had sought the protection of the Raja of Banpur who treated them in the best possible way, that Gordon had entrusted the management of the district to the Raja and if any British force arrived they were to give all assistance to Mardan Singh. The paper also said that Gordon signed on this document of his own free-will. The Deputy Commissioner, however later, explained that from fear of consequences, he was forced to put his signature on the paper.⁵³ If such a document was forcibly extorted from the British as Gordon later claimed, it revealed the Raja's perception of British authority. Under given conditions, Mardan Singh was able to compel the English into signing on the paper that his men dictated. Yet, Mardan Singh still regarded a formal legitimisation of his authority by the English Deputy Commissioner necessary. The spectre of British authority loomed large in his vision even in the midst of rebellion.

On the 30th of June, a group of British fugitives from Nowgong were brought to Banda as prisoners by the zamindars of village Georla Mugli. The Nawab and his mother the Begum, treated them very hospitably and later sent them with escort to Nagode. Ali Bahadur's behaviour was much appreciated by the English, later. On the 1st of August, he wrote to F.O. Mayne, the former Collector of Banda that he held the soldiers responsible for the rebellion and what followed and

53. From Lt. A.C. Gordon, Dy. Commr., 2nd class, Chanderi To Maj. Erskine, Commr. Saugar Div., Sagar 17th Sept 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No.237 (N.A.I).

said that inspite of best efforts he was not able to restore order for want of men and money.⁵⁴

Mardan Singh fought the soldiers, Laxmi Bai and Ali Bahadur in somewhat similar notes wrote to the British complaining about the soldiers and what their uprising had caused. More significant, both wrote that they were unable to control the surrounding country in the throes of rebellion. The sphere of politics that the 'rebels' and 'mutineers' commanded and that within which the Rajas operated lay at two different levels. The convergence between the two was yet to come about. But there could never be a synthesis. This incompatibility was revealed by another episode. After the outbreak in Jhansi, Laxmi Bai wrote to the ruler of Datia, relating the incident and urging that all Chiefs should make a combined effort 'to check the disturbances'.⁵⁵ Later she told representatives from Datia and Orchha that "... till arrangements were made from Jabalpur (by the British) such measures should be taken at Jhansi that no disturbances would occur".⁵⁶ The alignment of the forces of politics followed the equation of political, social and economic status. The stratification in politics and society ultimately

54. From R.R.W.Ellis, To the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Nagode, 2nd July 1857. For Sec. Cons. 31st July 1857, No.182 (N.A.I); N.E., Banda, Pt.II, p.327.

55. Deposition of Lalu Bakshi on 6th April 1858. Trial Proceedings in the case "Govt. Vs. Lalu Bakshi", Jhansi Collectorate Mutiny Basta (U.P.R.A.A.) F.S.U.P. pp. 48-57.

56. Ibid.

outlined the points at which different elements were mobilised at varied levels ensuring an optimum degree of solidarity in each of them.

4.6. The progress of Rebellion . .

The imminence of British return gradually faded before the progress of rebellion over a good part of Northern and Central India. As centralised authority receded, regional political forces that the former had arrested and frozen, were resurrected. Bundelkhand was once again swarmed with a number of small principalities and power-holders each in command of the immediate region. Attempts to refurbish their authority were accompanied by a scramble for more areas and larger shares of territory. In this pursuit, the Chiefs often failed to avoid open armed conflict. Troops of opposing Chiefs vying for the same region clashed and almost every district had its own internal battle to witness.

All the districts were fragmented as different feudal magnates helped themselves to slices of territories. In Banda, Narayan Rao and Madho Rao, the Jagirdars of Kirwi proclaimed their rule over the adjoining southern portion of the district. Maratha brahmins from Jalaun took possession of pargana Khundeh on the West, while men from the neighbouring principalities of Panna, Chirkhari, Ajaigarh and Berounda appropriated portions of parganas Senoda and Burousa in the south west. In Banda and its immediate vicinity, the right of sovereignty of Ali Bahadur was challenged by the Rani of Ajaigarh. Immediately after the uprising, Dhowa, a

Chieftan of Ajaigarh wanted the administration of Banda to be entrusted to him. But the soldiers decided that till the matter was referred ^{to} Nana Sahib, Ali Bahadur should assume charge of the region. The decision, however, did little to resolve the dispute, as a result of which both sent out their officials with troops to collect revenue from the same areas. In the middle of August, the first armed contest took place between Ali Bahadur and Dhowa ending favourably for the Ajaigarh men. The next day they fought again at Mimnepur and the battle continued for several days. Their final encounter took place on the 8th of October, following which the forces of Ajaigarh were totally routed and Dhowa together with two other Chiefs captured.⁵⁷

Parganas in Hamirpur were entrusted by the British to the Nawab of Baoni and the Raja of Chirkhari. The former, who lived at Kudaora, close to Hamirpur was to take charge of that pargana while the rest was to be looked after by the Raja of Chirkhari. The Raja of Chirkhari was able to retain the southern parganas under his control but lost Mahoba to Kesho Rao of Gurserai. South west of the district, the widow of Parichat, erstwhile ruler of Jaitpur, set herself as an independent Chief and appropriated the tahsildari funds. She was subsequently forced to evacuate Jaitpur by the Chirkhari troops.⁵⁸

In Jalaun, pargana Duboh was first taken under her rule by the Rani of Jhansi in June 1857. Two months later, the

57. N.E., Banda, Part II, para 24, p. 329.

58. N.E., Hamirpur, paras 16,18, p. 493.

Raja of Datia expelled Rani's officials and occupied the pargana with his own troops. Parganas, Indurki and Madhogarh together called Kuchwahaghar, went back to the Scindia of Gwalior, to whom it had originally belonged. Tai Bai, widow of the erstwhile ruler of Jalaun helped herself to areas adjoining Jalaun as did the Rais of Gurserai.⁵⁹

Jhansi had its share of parcelling out among Chiefs. A major part of that district had been under Laxmi Bai. On the 10th of August, a force of Tehri troops attacked Rani's territories, occupied Mau Ranipur on the south east, overran the three parganas of Mau, Pundwaha and Gurotha between rivers Betwa and Dhasan and then captured Burwa Sagar. They laid a siege on Jhansi between the 3rd of September and the 22nd of October, after which they were forced to withdraw.⁶⁰

Chanderi was totally under the control of the Bundela Rajputs. Mardan Singh of Banpur invaded a large portion of the sub-division as well as the north-western part of Sagar district and set up his own thanas. In this enterprise, he was actively supported by the neighbouring Bundela Chief, Raja of Shahgarh.⁶¹

Out of this process of resetting the political mosaic of Bundelkhand, emerged new patterns of alignment among the Chiefs. Mardan Singh of Banpur came to relieve Jhansi with

59. N.E., Jalaun, paras 5-7, p. 501.

60. N.E., Jhansi, para 78, p. 522.

61. Ibid, paras 71 & 75, p. 521.

reinforcements in the face of which the Tehri troops withdrew in October.⁶² The troops of the Nawab of Banda and that of Narain Rao of Kirwi acted in concert to combat the forces of the Rani of Ajaigarh.⁶³ Cast ties threw the Chiefs of the two Bundela States, Banpur and Shahgarh together. The convergence of the politics of rebellion and that ^{of} the Rajas took place along the lines of these new alignments. But the convergence was still some time to come.

The refurbished position of the Chiefs, however, did not restore the clock back to the pre-British days. It had emerged out of rebellion and the latter determined the context in which they could operate. The power of the feudal magnates had not been resurrected. The formal ties of feudal interdependence had weakened. Since the existing political structure was derived from rebellion and legitimised by it, its content was substantially altered. The departure of the mutineers after the expulsion of the British, therefore, did not ensure complete independence for the Chiefs. The officials who took service with them exercised a degree of control quite inconceivable ^{under} normal circumstances. In Banda, Vilayat Hussain and Miran, two non-residents of the place were said to have exercised uncontrolled authority. A certain Durgaprasad in his deposition on the 12th of November 1857 remarked, "The orders of the Nawab are sometimes rescinded, but those of

62. Ibid, para 78, p. 522.

63. Narrative of events in the N.W.P. for the week ending the 13th March, 1858. Home Dept. Public Branch, 30th April 1858. No.91 (N.A.I).

Vellayet Hossien and Meeran are never altered." ⁶⁴ Neither of the two held any official positions. But their orders carried the day. They even threatened to kill the Nawab if he joined the British force. ⁶⁵ Laxmi Bai was also surrounded by rebel Rajputs and erstwhile officials who largely circumscribed her flexibility of independent decision.

Forces of rebellion gained momentum in Bundelkhand as insurgents come crowding into this region from all directions. This movement took place in two phases. All the while rebellion and authority were pitted against each other in a keen contest to decide the political fate of Northern India, insurgents from all over tried to reach Delhi or Kanpur, in order to rally round Bahadur Shah or Nana Sahib. Situated as it was, insurgents from Bihar, Central India or Gwalior had to cross Bundelkhand to go north. In their passage through this region, they stopped at places like Banda, Jhansi and Kalpi. The second and more crucial phase began when the principal towns in the north fell into British hands. Tanya Topi and later Nana Sahib moved south into Bundelkhand to mobilise their scattered resources together, for their final struggle with the English. From having been a scene of rear-guard action, Bundelkhand gradually turned into a frontline of opposition against British authority. The fate of rebellion thereafter, rested

64. Trans. of a deposition given at Paiwa, on the 12th Nov. 1857, by Doorgaprasad before Major Ellis, Pol. Asstt., Agent for Bundelkhand. For.Sec. Cons. 29th Jan. 1858, No. 205 (N.A.I).

65. Ibid.

on retaining or regaining Bundelkhand by the combatants. Jhansi and later Kalpi in due course, stole the importance of Lucknow, Delhi and Kanpur in the contest for power. Between the time that Delhi and Kanpur were reoccupied by the British and Hugh Rose's forces marched into Bundelkhand in February 1858, rebellion reigned supreme in this area.

Banda witnessed a continuous stream of insurgent soldiers from the south and the east. The Political Agent at Rewa wrote in a demi-official letter, dated 26th September 1857, "... Banda ... is now becoming a rendezvous for mutineers".⁶⁶ In September, regiments after rising arrived from Dinapur, Arah and Nagode.⁶⁷ Though most of these insurgents left Banda soon after, some remained and all the while that they were here, Ali Bahadur had to accommodate them. The soldiers tried to patch up differences between the Nawab and the Dhowa of Ajaigarh. On the latter refusing to conciliate, they fought along with the Nawab's forces and decisively defeated the Dhowa.⁶⁸ Ali Bahadur arranged for reinforcements for the soldiers. He sent provisions to the troops and opened markets for them.⁶⁹ In order to pay his own soldiers and his establishment, he raised funds. He personally went to Kirwi and took a loan of 2 lakhs of rupees from Narayan Rao on condition that the district would henceforth

66. From Pol. Agent. Rewah (Demi-official) 26th Sept. 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 30th Oct. 1857, No.208 (N.A.I).

67. Cf. Chapter III.

68. N.E., Banda, para 24, p.329; From Fort Kalinjar 14th Oct. 1857, L.E.N. O'Brien, for Head Asstt. in charge. For. Sec. Progs. 30th Oct. 1857, No.206 (N.A.I).

69. Trans. of the deposition given at Panna on the 8th Nov.1857 by one Munsub Jaun, a peon before Maj. Ellis. Pol.Asstt. for Bundelkhand. For. Sec.Cons. 29th Jan. 1858 No. 204 (N.A.I)

be divided between the two of them, both agreeing thereafter, that each would help the other against adversaries.⁷⁰

Narayan Rao levied revenue on parganas, Chiboo, Dursenda, Tirohan, Budousa and half of Buberu while the Nawab did so on Pailani, Simouni, Banda, the other half of Budousa and Seonda. Ali Bahadur also brought pargana Khandeh and pargana Maudah in Hamirpur under his control. He had forts garrisoned at Maudah and Bhoragarh, the latter on river Ken.⁷¹

From Banda, the soldiers went to Hamirpur enroute to Kanpur.⁷² The town of Hamirpur from the very start, had been under the professed rule of Nana Sahib. In the absence of any local potentate, Peshwa's rule was proclaimed and the landlords had been ordered to pay their revenue to Nana's accredited agents.⁷³ The Raja of Chirkhari, a small principality to the south, on the other hand, had been entrusted with the administration of the southern parganas by Carne, the assistant Collector at Mahoba, who took refuge in his fort.⁷⁴ Rebellion did not rally around this native chief and he remained on the side of authority.

Soldiers from Gwalior reached Jhansi in the first week of October. But, for districts Jhansi and Jalaun, the turning

70. N.E., Banda, Pt.II, para 29, pp. 329-330.

71. Ibid.

72. From R.R.W. Ellis, to Hampton, Nagode 8th Sept. 1857 (demi-official). ~~For~~ Sec. Progs. 25th Sept. 1857, Nos. 292-294 (N.A.I).

73. N.E., Hamirpur, para 13, p. 492.

74. Ibid, para 16, p. 493.

point in the course of rebellion came with the arrival of Tantya Topi in Bundelkhand sometime in October 1857. With the fall of Delhi into British hands, rebellion receded southwards and fell back with its forces on this division. In Jalaun, both Kesho Rao and Tai Bai were willing to co-operate with Tantya Topi and the soldiers of the Gwalior contingent when they arrived in October. Tantya Topi however, displaced Kesho Rao and put Tai Bai's infant son on the throne, proclaiming her authority throughout the district.⁷⁵

In their final attempt to rally together and attack Kanpur, the insurgents chose Kalpi as the strategic centre of action. After having been repulsed in the North, they had come in scattered lots to Bundelkhand. They intended to mobilise their resources together at Kalpi and march against Kanpur. All the soldiers who had been in Banda came to Kalpi as did Kunwar Singh and Tantya Topi. A fairly large army of 13,000 men took possession of the Kalpi Fort.⁷⁶ They thereafter marched on Kanpur but having been defeated they returned to Kalpi in December 1857. Henceforth, the fate of rebellion hung on this town in Jalaun.

The Rajas, however, till quite late in 1857 had not conceived of any course of action in opposition to the British. In October, the Nawab of Banda still believed that

75. N.E., Jalaun, para 7, p. 501.

76. Copy of a service message received by electric Telegraph from Panna, 19th of Nov. 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 18th Dec. 1857, No.186 (N.A.I).

he was ruling Banda for the British and under their authority. But he was progressively being identified with the rebel forces. Several persons like the Gosain pensioners refused to take service with the Nawab.⁷⁷ The option to choose between rebellion and authority was gradually being narrowed. Perhaps there was no need or room for choice. The Nawab and the uprising were becoming one.

But with time, as rebellion gained grounds in the south of the Jamuna, even the feudal magnates came to believe that the British would never return. It was this belief that impelled them into action. A series of correspondence took place between the different Chiefs, soliciting each others' help and co-operation. The Scindia of Gwalior, whom the British regarded as a model of loyalty wrote to the Nawab of Banda on the 11th and 18th of November, 1857. He congratulated Ali Bahadur for having expelled the British and offered to help him, whenever required.⁷⁸ Bakht Bali of Shahgarh also wrote to Ali Bahadur on similar lines.

77. Trans. of a deposition at Panna on the 12th Nov. 1857, by Doorgapersad before Maj. Ellis, Pol. Asstt, Agent for Bundelkhand. For. Sec. Cons. 29th Jan. 1858, No.205 (N.A.I). Miran and Villayat Hussain sent for a certain Kunwar Jagat Geer and told him that if he served the Nawab he would be given a pargana. Kunwar Jagat Geer refused to accept any employment under the Nawab as he was a pensioner of the British Government. Five families of Gosains left Banda.

78. Trans. of a Hindi letter from the Maharaja Scindiah to Nawab Ali Bahadur of Banda, dated 15th Kartick Soodee 1914 Sambut, corresponding with 11th Nov. 1857. For. Pol. Cons., 11th March 1859, Nos.238-44 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P. pp. 162-163.

"All persons, whether Mahomedans or Hindoos who are ready to kill the infidels stand in the relation of brother to each other on account of their embracing cause of religion. Those kings, who keep the infidels in their own houses, whether Mahomedans or Hindoos, are our enemies, be they our own brothers of strangers". 79

Stating that Peshwa was both his and Ali Bahadur's malik or patron, Bakht Bali drew the lines of identification clearly.⁸⁰ The British were infidels and the enemy; those who opposed them were allies.

The Chiefs set out to mobilise their forces and align themselves. The Nawab of Banda exchanged letters with the rulers of Shahgarh, Chattarpur, the Rajas of Rewa, Bijayraghgarh and Nana Sahib of Bithur.⁸¹ Similar notes were also sent on behalf of the Peshwa, to the different Chiefs, soliciting their help in the fight for religion against the infidels.⁸² The pattern of mobilisation among

79. Letter from Raja Bakht Bali of Shahgarh (with his seal) to Nawab Ali Bahadur, dated Shahgarh, the 1st Aghan, 1914 Samvat, corresponding with 3rd Dec. 1857. Banda Collectorate Mutiny Records, File No.XVIII-35 (U.P.R.A.A) F.S.U.P. pp. 163-164.

80. Ibid.

81. From F.O.Mayne, Magistrate of Banda, To C.B.Thornhill, Offg. Commr., 4th Div., Banda 4th Aug. 1858. Enclosed with the forwarding letter were original letters, drafts of letters and other correspondence that took place between Ali Bahadur and the other potentates. For. Pol. Cons. 8th Oct. 1858, No.13 (N.A.I).

82. Trans. of a circular letter addressed to the Chiefs of Bundelkhand by an individual styling himself Mohomed Esak, Aide-de-Camp to Maharaja Sreemunt Peshwa, dated 15th Jumadeeul-Awwal, 1274 A.N., corresponding with 2nd Jan. 1858. For. Pol.Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, No.2132 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 211-212. Another letter with identical contents was written by Tantya Topi for circulation among the local chiefs of Bundelkhand. Trans. of a letter from Ramchunder Pandoorung Tantya Topi, 2nd Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl., No.620 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 213-214. Cf. Chapter III.

the Chiefs worked along lines drawn by the political category all subscribed to. In their opposition to British authority, the Chiefs looked to each other for assistance. The realm of their politics worked at a level that certainly stood apart from that of the others. Writing to the Nana, Ali Bahadur said, "The Bundelas have ... surrounded the District and some have advanced with their troops to a short distance from this, I am unable to drive them away owing to want of means. If now, you send me assistance agreeable to my request, I can take possession of the Pergunnahs of Banda ..." 83 Even the pervading rebellious atmosphere had not fused the initiative of the Rajas with the actions of men at other layers of society. Rallying around the case of religion, the Chiefs essentially worked for a union among themselves.

4.7. In the wake of British counter-insurgency, January, 1858.

British reoccupation of the principal towns in the North brought home to all in Bundelkhand, the presentiment of British reprisals and counter attacks. This was a crucial moment for the Rajas. On the face of an imminent British counter march on Bundelkhand, the Rajas realised that they had to make the final choice of either fighting for rebellion or standing in support of authority. For, by the beginning of 1858, the two strands left no in between.

83. From F.O.Mayne, To C.N.Thornhill, Banda 4th August 1858. Draft of a letter from Nawab Ali Bahadur to Nana Sahib Bahadur at Bithoor. For. Pol. Cons. 8th Oct. 1858, No.13 (N.A.I).

Yet, the potentates were even allowed the indulgence of an option because they had been drawn into a movement that was not essentially theirs and also because of the deference their political status commanded. Long association with forces of rebellion, however, increasingly identified them with it, thereby gradually closing the avenues of choice.

Laxmi Bai therefore tried long to keep her records clean for British approval. Though living in the midst of rebellion and being surrounded by soldiers and thakurs who would have no compromise, she kept herself from any irrevocable commitment. She told the former Jail Darogah, Bakshish Ali in January 1858 that she would not fight the English but would return all the districts under her charge to them, whenever they came to Jhansi.⁸⁴ According to an abstract of intelligence from Bundelkhand dated 26th January 1858, the Rani sent a Vakil to Sipri to meet the English. She said that if the Vakil was treated well, she would not oppose the English but if he was shown displeasure, she would fight to the last.⁸⁵ The situation was still fluid for her and she looked to the reactions of British authority to shape her own course of action. In January, she wrote to the agent

84. News from Bundelkhand dt. 5th Jan. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858, No.115 (N.A.I).

85. Abstract of Intelligence from Bundelkund, dated 26th Jan. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 26th March 1858, Nos. 32-33 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. p. 221.

of the Governor General in Central India "... these short sighted individuals (the rebels) seem unmindful of the British supremacy and do their best to ruin myself and the whole country." Describing the strange and 'unexpected' occurrences that took place in the absence of the British, she earnestly appealed for help in order to be able to "... cope with the enemy".⁸⁶ As yet, the incompatibility between Laxmi Bai and the insurgent soldiers or the rebellious thakurs remained unresolved in the former's perception.

Meanwhile, however, the Rani had the immediate situation to grapple with. There were a large number of rebels, soldiers and thakurs in Jhansi and Laxmi Bai depended on them to fight the Tehri forces. Frequent skirmishes took place between the two in January at Mau Ranipur. Gunpowder was manufactured and stored in the fort and provisions made for new guns.⁸⁷

For Mardan Singh of Banpur, the option had already closed. He was in Jhansi till the 6th of January trying to form a concert of the Chiefs. In this he failed and left thereafter for Banpur. He made every preparation to combat the British forces. The forts of Chanderi and Balabehut were reinforced. "If arrested he does not expect to escape hanging. This being his impression, he says it is much better to die

86. Trans. of a Kharita from the Rani of Jhansi To the Agent G.G. for Central India dt. 14th Jamadeeoolawal A.H. 1274 Corresponding to 3rd January 1858. For. Sec.Cons. 25th June 1858, No.115 (N.A.I.).

87. News for Bundelkhand, 5th Jan. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858, No.115 (N.A.I.).

then to be hanged by the hands of a sweeper. He seems to be desirous of surrendering. Should his life be spared and a promise given to that effect".⁸⁸ Since reconciliation with authority seemed no longer possible, identification with rebellion was the only choice. On hearing that the Rani of Jhansi was still unwilling to fight the English, Bakshish Ali had not taken service with her. He went to Lalitpur and was employed by Mardan Singh.⁸⁹

4.8. Rebellion in defence

The hope in the success of rebellion gradually gave in to the foreboding of British return. The rebels of the north prepared for their last stand in Kalpi, while Tantya Topi and Nana Sahib set out to organise the potentates. A certain Syed Muhammad Ishq was specially appointed by Nana Sahib to manage the affairs in Bundelkhand. Muhammad Ishq and Tantya Topi sent identical letter to the chiefs of Bundelkhand, asking them to assist the Peshwa with men and guns. "If all the chiefs for the purpose of defending their religion and faith, join together and be of one mind and render as much assistance as they respectively can, it will not be difficult to annihilate through the divine favour (favour), all the remaining Christians". The letters also informed that soldiers and rebel forces were being assembled at Kalpi.⁹⁰

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Trans. of a circular letter addressed to the Chiefs of Bundelkhand - Bundelkhand by Mahomed Esak, Aide-de-Camp to Maharaja Sreemunt Peshwa, 2nd Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, No. 2132 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P. pp. 211-12. Cf. Chapter III.

While the rebels were entrenching themselves all along the Jamuna in the north, the first signs of British forces appeared on the horizon of Bundelkhand. They reached the Ghat on the Jamuna opposite Banda district on its north in the first week of January. A bridge was being constructed over Jamuna, which when completed, the district was to be attacked. Ali Bahadur prepared to fight.⁹¹ He had all the boats at the Chilla Tara Ghat on Jamuna sunk to prevent the British from moving into the district. With a force of 2,000 men he decided to defend himself in his Fort around which he dug an entrenchment.⁹² A large force, with 7 guns were sent towards Chilla Tara Ghat to resist the British army.⁹³

British troops also closed on the ghat on the north of Hamirpur.⁹⁴ The crucial march of the counter insurgency forces came with the entry of Major General Hugh Rose into Central India, early in January 1858. On the 24th of January, Rose reached Rahatgarh, 25 miles west of Sagar and occupied the Fort.⁹⁵ In defence, Mardan Singh with about 3,000 followers moved to Naraowli.⁹⁶

91. News from Bundelkhand, 5th Jan. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858, No.115 (N.A.I).

92. Copy of service message by Electric telegraph. For. Sec. Cons. 29th Jan. 1858, No.218 (N.A.I).

93. Further Papers (No.8) relative to 'The Mutinies in the East Indies', Inclosure 1 in No.2 p. 31. Narrative of Events, dated Fort William, Jan.23, 1858. F.S.U.P. pp. 214-215.

94. Abstract Trans. of a letter from Naroo Ramchand Atowlee (Athavle) dt. Humirpuor, 2nd Soodee of Maugh, 1914 Sumbut, corresponding with 17th Jan. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.623 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P. p. 257.

95. John Kaye, History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58. Vol.V.(Connecticut, 1971), pp. 95-96.

96. Abstract of Intelligence. For. Sec.Cons. 26th March 1858, No.42 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P. p. 216.

The only Chief who at this stage could take an offensive stand against the rebels, was the Raja of Chirkhari. Fortified in the belief that the British was on their way to relieve Bundelkhand, he attacked a body of mutineers at Jalalpur on the river Betwa.⁹⁷ The Chirkhari force was, however, defeated and suffered great loss.⁹⁸

The progressive advance of Hugh Rose completely destabilised the situation in Bundelkhand. It set off a feverish movement among the rebel forces as they moved from one place to another to get together their scattered resources. Bundelkhand turned into a battle ground, where rebellion and authority were pitted against each other in the last lap of their struggle for ascendancy. The British march for the reimposition of power followed a preconceived plan of action. Two columns of British troops were to proceed to Bundelkhand from two different sides. One coming from Bombay Presidency, was to sweep the country between Central India and Kalpi, reconquering Jhansi in its course. The second coming from Madras, would cross Bundelkhand to reach and reoccupy Banda. Kalpi and Banda were in short the two points towards which the two columns were separately directed.⁹⁹

The progressive advance of British forces denied the Rajas their privilege of making a choice. For Hugh Rose as

97. Further Papers (No.8), relative to 'The Mutinies in the East Indies', Inclosure 1 in No.2. p.3. N.E. dated Fort William, Jan. 23, 1858. F.S.U.P. pp.214-215.

98. Abstract of Intelligence. For. Sec. Cons. 26th March 1858, No.42 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., p. 216.

99. Kaye, op.cit., p. 91. cf. Chapter VII.

for most British reviewing the movement in Bundelkhand from a distance, Laxmi Bai, Ali Bahadur or Mardan Singh were as much^a part of the rebellion as soldiers and thakurs. There was no question of any reconciliation. Therefore, in February 1858, when R.N.C. Hamilton, the Agent for Central India and Bundelkhand forwarded Rani of Jhansi's letter professing loyalty to the English in general terms, the orders clearly stated, "The letter to be ignored;" and in the narrative of the week Laxmi Bai was referred to as the rebel Rani of Jhansi.¹⁰⁰ The Rajas had turned rebels in the eyes of authority and they had to fight. It was now that these potentates were found taking initiative in positive decisions and implementing them.

Anticipating the contest that they would have to face in the near future, the Rajas made provisions for the contingency. In the battle over the fort of Rahatgarh, Mardan Singh led a besieging force against the English but was completely repulsed.¹⁰¹ With the fall of Rahatgarh, began Rose's march on Central India. The Banpur Chief set out to mobilise his resources. He secured all the corn from this region and collected them in the fort of Talbehat and Chanderi. He organised the neighbouring thakurs and their forces, all of whom promised to fight for the Chief till the end.¹⁰² While contemporary reports inform us of

100. Narrative of Events in the North-Western Provinces for the week ending the 14th Feb. 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82. 1858 (U.P.S.A.L).

101. Kaye, op.cit., p. 97.

102. Abstract of Intelligence, 10th Feb. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 26th March, 1858, No.42 (N.A.I).

Mardan Singh's preparations for fighting, they also tell us that the Raja" ... regrets of what he had done. Extremely desirous of being pardoned; being driven to despair resolves to fight",¹⁰³ and that the mutinous chiefs (Rajas of Banpur and Shahgarh) wish to be pardoned or if not, they intend to fight to the last.¹⁰⁴ However, harbouring little hopes that the British would be willing to reconcile, they continued ^{to} fortify themselves. The Chiefs of Banpur, Shahgarh and Bijayraghohar intended defending Dhamoni and if defeated, they decided to proceed to Jhansi. A skirmish took place between their forces and that of the British at a villages called Parol, whereafter the Chiefs encamped near the lake of Dhamoni.¹⁰⁵

Laxmi Bai of Jhansi was placed in a similar quandary. Although professing to have no intentions of fighting the English, the situation around, moved her more and more towards preparing for the ensuing struggle. While soldiers and insurgents flocked to Jhansi from all round, 200 maunds of salt petre were imported into the city from Gwalior, guns and gunpowder were manufactured and ammunitions prepared. Laxmi Bai kept up communications with Mardan Singh. She received his ambassador and sent presents for the latter's

103. Abstract of Intelligence from Tehri, 11th February 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, Nos.130-133 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. p. 251.

104. Abstract of Intelligence from Tehri, 21st Feb. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April, 1858, No.135 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P. p. 256.

105. Ibid.

newly born child. Some troops from Jhansi marched south in assistance of the Banpur Chief. The Rani at the same time cordoned the city off, allowing no one to leave it and ordered that her forces from Mau Ranipur be withdrawn.¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, the ongoing progress of Rose's forces reached Jhansi. Much upset by the tidings, Laxmi Bai made provisions for defence. Guns, gun powder and ammunitions were stored inside the fort, in an attempt to strengthen it.¹⁰⁷

Tantya Topi on the other hand, proceeded to exterminate all possible opposition to rebellion, the most serious of which was offered by the Raja of Chirkhari. He therefore, planned to capture Chirkhari fort. By the 2nd of February, much of the territories in Chirkhari fell to Tantya Topi and his men, though the city and fort were yet to be captured. Tantya Topi sent urgent appeals to all neighbouring Chiefs, officers in the army and the thakurs who had revolted, for help. Ali Bahadur of Banda sent Tantya Topi 4 guns, ammunitions^a and a large number of soldiers.¹⁰⁸ The rebels intended to march to the assistance of Mardan Singh and Bakht Bali after Chirkhari was taken. A concert of Rajas had emerged and Rose was determined to break it.

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106. Abstract of Intelligence from Bundelkhand, Datia 4th February 1858 and Abstract of Intelligence, Datia, February 7, 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 26th March 1858, Nos.41-42 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 221-223.
107. Abstract of Intelligence from Datia, 13th February, 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, Nos.130-133 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p. 224.
108. Trans. of letter from Ali Bahadur to Nana Sahib, Banda, 8th Rajieub, corresponding with 23rd February, 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl., No.642 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 238-239.

Early in March, Rose defeated the last resistance that the Rajas of Banpur and Shahgarh put up together at the Passes of Narhat and Madanpur. Quite certain that the British forces would pass through the Pass at Narhat, Mardan Singh defended it with eight to ten thousand men. Rose, however, diverted his route and marched to the Pass at Madanpur, a little south-east of Narhat. He attacked it before Mardan Singh could come to the assistance of the Raja of Shahgarh, defending Madanpur.¹⁰⁹ The Pass gave in to the British on the 4th of March. On the 10th, British forces reached Banpur to find the town and palace deserted. Proclamations were sent round declaring that the territories of the Rajas of Banpur and Shahgarh were confiscated.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, another contingent of British troops under Brig. C.S. Stuart occupied the town and fort of Chanderi on the 17th of March. Thus Rose was able to write on the 26th of March to Maj. Gen. Mansfield the Chief of Staff at Kanpur that "... the whole country between Saugor and Jhansi to the east of the River Betwa, which since the outbreak of rebellion had been in the hands of the insurgents, was now, with the exception of Tal-Behat, restored to the Government."¹¹¹

109. Letter from Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose to Maj. Gen. Mansfield, Chief of the staff, Kanpur, Camp. before Jhansi, 26th March 1858. Govt. Gazette, N.W.P. Vol. I. No. XV. Allahabad, Tuesday, June 1st 1858, pp. 154-160. F.S.U.P., pp. 302-305.

110. From G.F. Edmonstone, Allahabad To C. Beadon, Calcutta, 16th March 1858, For. Sec. Progs. 30th April 1858, No. 326 (N.A.I.).

111. Letter from Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose to Maj. Gen. Mansfield, Chief of the Staff, Cawnpore, Camp. before Jhansi, 26th March, 1858. Govt. Gazette, N.W.P. Vol. I, No. XV, Allahabad, Tuesday June 1st 1858, pp. 154-160. F.S.U.P. pp. 302-305.

Successive British victories in the south of Bundelkhand threw the Bundela forces under the Rajas of Banpur and Shahgarh into confusion. They scattered and dispersed in small disorganised groups to places of safety. Some joined the Jhansi troops, beseiging Orcha.¹¹² The oldest son of the Raja of Banpur, Dewan Sher Singh with about 1,600 men headed towards Jhansi.¹¹³ Bakht Bali of Shahgarh escaped into the jungles.¹¹⁴ After a fairly circuitous journey, Mardan Singh reached Jhansi on the 15th of March accompanied by 2,500 cavalry and Infantry soldiers with two guns. Laxmi Bai sent provisions for him and the two met early next morning.¹¹⁵ A day later, following Rani's instructions to the effect, Mardan Singh left Jhansi and finally joined Tantya Topi's forces.¹¹⁶ A constant movement marked Mardan Singh's actions in the face of British advance. Defeated by Rose, the Chief was driven to seek defence. The initiative of evolving alternate strategies of action slipped him. He joined Tantya Topi and henceforth the initiative of action passed to the former and his rebel forces. Mardan Singh

112. Intelligence from Tehri, 6th March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.1480(N.A.I) F.S.U.P. p.283.

113. Abstract of Intelligence, Jhansi. 8th March 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April, 1858, Nos.144-145 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., pp. 283-284.

114. Trans. of News furnished Ganeshu Lall, writer in the Bundelkhand Boundary Settlement Office, after his escape from the Fort of Soorae where he was kept confined by the Raja of Shahghar, 8th March, 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th March 1858, Nos.122-123(N.A.I).

115. Abstract of Intelligence, Jhansi, 13th March 1858. For. Sec.Cons. 30th April 1858, No.147 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 289-91.

116. Abstract of Intelligence, Alipura, 16th March 1858. For Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, No.147 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. p. 295.

became one among many insurgents who waged their last die-hard battle against British authority.

Rebel actions in Bundelkhand intensified in March, 1858. They captured the city of Chirkhari on the evening of 1st March and forced the Raja to buy peace at the cost of three lakhs of rupees. Deserted by his soldiers, the Raja was compelled to negotiate with Tantya Topi and his men. The insurgents thereafter dispersed, the bulk of them moving towards Orchha to bring it to submission, while large bands went north to assembly in Jhansi and Kalpi.¹¹⁷

Laxmi Bai in Jhansi was much distressed by what she heard around her. The news of British recapture of the district of Chanderi and their proposed march to Jhansi disconcerted her. Within Jhansi, the swollen number of soldiers and insurgents denied her any prerogative of independent action. Some of them routed the Orcha troops in Burwa Sagar completely, intending to attack the town itself next. Meanwhile Rani's immediate advisers fell among themselves over what course should be taken. Some like Kashinath Hari and Lalu Baksh repeatedly advised her to make peace with the English and not to fight them. Some others including Rani's father Mama Sahib held, that Jhansi should not be given up without resistance. "The Rani is both disposed to fight, and

117. Letter from J.H.Carne, Asstt. Magistrate on duty at Chirkharee to the Secy. to the Govt. of India with the G.C., Allahabad, 4th March 1858, No.18. Parl. Papers, "The Native Princes of India", 1860, Chirkhari, No.18, pp. 73-74. F.S.U.P. pp. 241-247.

to make terms, to fight from the fear of mutineers in her service, to make terms by the advice of some of her functionaries. But preparations are being made to fight".¹¹⁸

Preparations were more for defensive purposes, while Laxmi Bai made a last ditch effort to send word to the English for reconciliation. On the Jamadar of the thana of Babina reporting that British troops had reached Talbehat, a Kharita was sent to him for delivering it to Hugh Rose.¹¹⁹ On the 18th of March, one of the Harkaras came back to tell the Rani that he had delivered the Kharita to the Agent but the latter did not give any reply.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, Laxmi Bai tried to cordon off Jhansi from the entry of rebel forces. She asked the Raja of Banpur to leave and refused to let the heir of the Narwar Raj, into the city. The reimposition of British authority now seemed an inevitable reality of the near future. In the wake of it, reconciliation was the first choice that the Rajas wanted to opt for. But they had to provide for the other contingency, resistance. 6 guns were placed on the walls of the city in Jhansi. All houses near the walls were ordered to be evacuated so that soldiers could be stationed.¹²¹ The soldiers however, were determined to fight. They demanded that their arrears of pay should be met

118. Abstract of Intelligence, 18th March 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, No.147 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 296-297.

119. Ibid.

120. Ibid.

121. Abstract of Intelligence, Jhansee, 15th March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl., No.1762 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 292-293.

and their services dispensed with, if the Rani intended to come to terms with the British.¹²² The dilemma of Laxmi Bai was apparent. On the 20th of March, the Rani sent out men to repair the town and had ammunition distributed among the troops. The contingency had arrived. Rose closed the options for reconciliation. He marched on Jhansi on the 21st of March. Laxmi Bai and her advisers had sat down to write what was their last letter to the Agent, stating that they were ready to pay obedience. Before the letter was finished, they saw soldiers surrounding the city and ordered fire to be opened on them. The battle of Jhansi began. Rose did not return fire till the 25th and made the first effective attack on the 28th. "The Rani did not take her meals till evening and was much distressed and distracted. She took up her quarters in an under ground house in the Fort".¹²³ The choice for her was taken.

In Banda, Ali Bahadur braced himself against the coming confrontation that he knew was unavoidable. Troops from Banda went to assist the rebel forces at Chirkhari. The Nawab had at the end of March a force of ten to eleven thousand soldiers and 23 guns. Some were sent to the Chilla Tara Ghat on Jamuna to resist British forces from the North. Ali Bahadur was in constant communication with Nana Sahib and was supported by the Jagirdars of Kirwi.¹²⁴

122. Abstract of Intelligence, 17th March 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, No.147 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p.296.

123. For. Sec. Cons. 30th May 1858, Nos.127-128 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p. 299.

124. From R.Hamilton, Agent to the G.G. for Central India, To G.F.Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Jhansi, 29th March. Abstract of Intelligence. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, Nos.122-123 (N.A.I).

The chapter on the role of Rajas in the rebellion of 1857-58 closed by April 1858 as the curtain rose to the story of British re-capture of the principal towns in Bundelkhand. Tantya Topi with a large force of 20 to 25 thousand men and 20 or 30 guns, accompanied by Mardan Singh of Banpur attacked Rose's army at Burwa Sagar. They were decisively defeated on the 1st of April and thereafter headed for Kalpi.¹²⁵

On the 3rd of April, Rose stormed the city of Jhansi¹²⁶ and by the next day was able to take possession of most of the town. The same night i.e. 4th of April, Laxmi Bai with some soldiers, left Jhansi for Bhandere. The Fort fell into British hands on the 5th.¹²⁷ The cause of organised rebellion was to all purposes lost after the fall of Jhansi. The battle of Kalpi was to sing its final dirge.

Being forced out of her city, Laxmi Bai, like Mardan Singh joined and followed Tantya Topi and the rebels. Meanwhile, in Jalaun, Tai Bai, in the wake of successive British victories, wanted like all her counterparts, to reconcile with the English. But unable to do so and frightened at the spectacle of repulsed rebel forces pouring into

125. From Maj. Macpherson, Pol. Agent Agra, To G.F. Edmonstone, Allahabad, 3rd April 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 30th April 1858, No.260 (N.A.I).

126. From Maj. Macpherson, To G.F. Edmonstone, 4th April 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 30th April 1858, No.261 (N.A.I).

127. From Capt. F.W. Pinkney, Supdt. of Jhansi, To W. Muir, Secy. to the Govt. of the N.W.P., Camp. Jhansi, 7th April 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 15th Oct. 1858, No.55 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 322-325.

the district, evacuated Jalaun and fled to Jagmanpur.¹²⁸

In the east, a column of British forces reached Hamirpur, early in April and General Whitlock leading the second division from Madras won his first victory at Bhowraghar on the 19th. Ali Bahadur evacuated Banda and with his force went south, eventually to cross over to the Hamirpur district.¹²⁹ F.O. Mayne arrived at Banda on the 29th of April and took charge of the district. He found the city absolutely deserted.¹³⁰

Tantya Topi, Rani of Jhansi and Raja of Banpur decided to give Rose a battle at Kunch before the final showdown at Kalpi. On the 7th of May the British forces occupied the fort of Kunch. Laxmi Bai and Tantya Topi fled to Kalpi.¹³¹ The Chief of Gursrai met Rose and was entrusted with the charge of Kunch. Tai Bai went back to Jalaun, earnestly wishing to make peace with the British.¹³² In the message of 16th May, it was reported that the erstwhile

128. From R. Hamilton, Agent to the G.G. for Central India, To G.F. Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Jhansi, 14th April 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 28th May 1858, Nos. 132-133 (N.A.I).

129. From Gov. Gen. of India, To the Court of Directors, E.I.C., Allahabad, May 1, 1858, enclosing Narrative of Events. Further Papers (No.8) relative to 'The Mutinies in East Indies'. Inclosure 1 in No.14. pp. 146-147.

130. From F.O. Mayne, To C.B.Thornhill, 1st May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No.68 (N.A.I).

131. From Capt. F.W.Pinkney, Suptd. Camp Orai, 10th May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No.80 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 370-371.

132. Ibid.

Rani of Jalaun "... laid aside her purdah and preceeded to to the Agent's tent. Enquiry was being made regarding her officials".¹³³

Rebels fell back on Kalpi, their last resort. Ali Bahadur joined Laxmi Bai and Tantya Topi at Kalpi. The Rajas of Banpur and Shahgarh, however, moved south towards their own territories.¹³⁴ Rose arrived in the neighbourhood of Kalpi on the 15th of May. The battle began on the 22nd and Kalpi fell to the British on the 23rd.¹³⁵ All the Chiefs fled from Kalpi on the eve of British occupation. Tantya Topi left before the combat began, Laxmi Bai went on the 22nd night and the Nawab of Banda on the morning of 23rd.¹³⁶

All the Chiefs and their forces escaped westward from Kalpi. Fleeing in different orders, they assembled near Gwalior around the 31st of May. Between the 1st and the time when British forces marched upon Gwalior, the rebels set about to organise and fortify themselves. Laxmi Bai was said to be in command of the force along with Tantya Topi.¹³⁷

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133. Message from E.A.Reade, Agra, 16th May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No.77, (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 376-377.
134. Intelligence, 6th May 1858, from Camp of Sir H. Rose, 5th May. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, Nos. 70-71 (N.A.I); Intelligence Agra, 12th May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No. 73 (N.A.I).
135. Narrative of Events, May 25th, 1858. Allahabad, May 26th, 1858. Further Papers (No.8) relative to 'The Mutinies in the East Indies', Inclosure 1, No.16, p. 156.
136. From R. Hamilton, Agent Gov.Gen. for Central India, To G.F.Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India with the Gov.Gen. Kalpi, 24th May 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 10th Sept. 1858, No.103 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P. pp. 380-382.
137. Originals of daily bulletings issued by Mr.E.A.Reade during March-July 1858. Message from E.A.Reade, Agra, 6th and 7th June 1858. (U.P.S.A.L) F.S.U.P., pp.420-421.

She was continually on horse back, armed with sword and pistol at the head of 300 Horse. She was described thus:
 " Sometimes she puts on - 'Saree and cholee', and at others, she ties a Roomal round her head, after the fashion of the Pathans".¹³⁸

British forces in separate columns entered Gwalior both from the East and ^{the} West. The contest began on the 16th of May. Laxmi Bai and Ali Bahadur commenced firing from their respective positions. It was on the same day that Rani of Jhansi was killed in the battle field. Reports differ as to the manner in which she died. The generally accepted version is that she was hit while she was trying to escape from Phulbagh in the Gwalior city.¹³⁹

Death turned Laxmi Bai into a martyr. Surrender by the other Chiefs eclipsed their actions into ignominy. Their resistance was lost in the story of the reassertion of British authority.

Mardan Singh and Bakht Bali returned to Lalitpur after the battle at Kunch. Following the departure of Tantya Topi and his forces and Rose and his army, the district of Chanderi was left to the Bundela thakurs who rapidly rose in arms. On returning to the South, the Banpur and Shahgarh

138. News from Gwalior, 9th June 1858, Wednesday, sent by Ganeshi Lall, Suptd. dated Datia 13th June 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 27th Aug. 1858, Nos. 75-77 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 422-423.

139. Report on the Affairs of Gwalior from the 24th of May to the 20th of June 1858 sent by S.C. Macpherson, Pol. Agent, Gwalior, 30th September 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, Nos. 4281-4283. (N.A.I), F.S.U.P., pp. 462-463.

Chiefs found themselves in the midst of thakur uprisings. But British authority was a reality, Mardan Singh could not overlook. Early in July, he went to meet British officials and was asked to go to Jhansi. Mardan Singh surrendered to authority.¹⁴⁰

Ali Bahadur continued to be with Tantya Topi and accompanied the latter on his second attempt to occupy Chanderi. Proximity with the rebels precluded the Nawab from giving himself up to the British. On the 2nd of November, he wrote to the British Agent in Central India, pleading mercy for actions that he had been compelled to undertake. "Since last (6) months I have fallen into the clutches of the tyrants and am reduced to a state of misery, wretchedness and affliction".¹⁴¹ The last of the Rajas in Bundelkhand surrendered.

The rebellion at the level of the Rajas defy the formula of a standard definition of the term. To the contemporary British officials and later English historians, the Chiefs in Bundelkhand had been motivated by self-interest and hopes of immediate gains. As one official put it, they "... joined different sides as it seemed to their advantage at different times".¹⁴² By supporting the rebels or

140. From Capt. F.W. Pinkey, Commr. of Jhansi Dvn., To W. Muir, Secy. to Govt. N.W.P., Jhansi 26th July 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 24th Sept. 1858, No.7 (N.A.I).

141. Trans. of a letter from Ali Bahadur, Nawab of Banda to the Agent. G.G. for Central India, 2nd November, 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 1st April 1859. Nos.248-259 (N.A.I).

142. N.E., Hamirpur, para 20, p. 493.

professing loyalty to the English as and when required by exigencies, these potentates played a 'double game'.

Indian historians have two sets of explanations regarding the actions of these feudal magnates. First, that the Chiefs rose in protest against the unlawful usurption of their ancestral dominion by the British. It was their way of avenging a wrong inflicted upon them by the foreigners.¹⁴³ According to the second explanation these Chiefs had initially little to do with the mutineers and rebels, and remained unwavering in their support for law and order that the British symbolised. Constant pressure from the surrounding rebels, however, forced them to take control of the administration and they did so only till such time as they could hand it over to the British. It was eventually the antagonistic attitude of the English and their insistence on fighting with the Chiefs, that compelled the latter to take up the charge for safeguarding their honour and that of their country.¹⁴⁴

In a recently published article, E.I. Brodtkin¹⁴⁵ postulated a yet third formula for analysing the rebellion of the Rajas. According to him, the British withdrawal set off a

143. This is a standard text-book analysis of Laxmi Bai's action in 1857-58. An enumeration of the grievances that she might have been festering against the British betray a tendency to link the Rani's actions to her complaints of S.N. Sinha, 'The Revolt of 1857 in Bundelkhand' (Lucknow 1982), pp. 117-158.

144. Ibid, pp. 132-157 & S.N. Sen, Eighteen Fifty-Seven (Delhi, 1957), pp. 271-296.

145. E.I. Brodtkin, "The struggle for Succession: Rebels and Loyalists in the Indian Mutiny of 1857". Modern Asian Studies. Vol.6. Part 3. July 1972.

struggle for power in which such concepts as loyalty and rebelliousness were peripheral. When the British returned they usually looked upon the Hindu faction as loyal and the Muslims were branded as rebels. The latter thus, had no alternative but to fight the English. Though Brodwin considers the way, changed perception of authorities towards regional powerholders, often determined the Raja's ultimate course of action, he overlooks the decisive influence that the raging insurgency of soldiers and local people had on the local potentates. In the case of Bundelkhand of course, most analysis and description, as stated earlier, centred on the Rani of Jhansi.

From the beginning to the end, the initiative of rebellion was never taken up by the Chiefs. The soldiers began the movement, rebel officials took decisions during it and Tantya Topi at the head of a large force of insurgents, laid out strategies of war and geared its course till the end. Yet, for the political power they symbolised, the movement in all its phases rallied around the Rajas. In the absence of the English, the regional potentates stood for an alternate order and thereby provided rebellion with its political focus. The English too acknowledged the authority that the Rajas represented when they formally handed them over the administration of the regions, they were forced to evacuate. By virtue of their political status, thus, the Rajas were thrown into the midst of activities over which they had no control. They suddenly tumbled on power in 1857 which they could not use but which they personified. Significantly, this power was first given to them by the English

and later sanctioned by the rebels; for both authority and rebellion made use of the Rajas as symbols of power. The former required them as a stop-gap, the latter as a source of political legitimisation of the alternate structure of power. Thus, the Rajas for sometime, represented both the forces of authority and rebellion but belonged to neither as they did not positively act in the interest of any of the two. This caused a natural ambivalence in their perception and behaviour in 1857. In the course of the entire movement, the Rajas were made to act out roles rooted in history but conceived and directed by others, in the present. They became prisoners of their past that they had to relive under changed circumstances. What was important was not their personal involvement or active commitment for or against rebellion but their physical presence that served both. Individually Laxmi Bai, Ali Bahadur, Mardan Singh were lost in the roles they were supposedly playing, the ascribed power they were meant to be enacting. The actions of these Rajas and the roles thrust upon them were at variance to each other. They were rulers without power, figureheads without authority. Therefore, while the rule of Laxmi Bai was declared in Jhansi, the Rani wielded power only nominally; and this was true for all her counterparts. To the British counter-insurgency forces, however, the Chiefs appeared leaders of rebellion when leadership and initiative in rebellion always eluded them. It would be too simplistic to call them 'double faced' as it would be to extoll them as national heroes. They were neither. They were puppets on strings that the rebels and the British alternately manoeuvred.

Laxmi Bai was forced to fight by Hugh Rose just as she had been forced to play the Rani in 1857.

*
The Revolt of the thakurs in Bundelkhand.

The uprising of the feudal magnates constitutes one of the most fascinating chapters in the revolt of 1857 in Bundelkhand. Its distinctive features reflected the particular situation in which the landed magnates of this division lived in and their experiences related to it. While the soldiers operated in towns and tried to build together with the local Rajas a linear network of political actions and alliances, the thakurs replaced British authority in their respective regions to provide the movement of 1857 in Bundelkhand its fractured content. In the wake of the crisis that authority faced in 1857, these thakurs rose to utilise the moment for rearranging in their immediate locality, the political order that had been dislocated by the centralised British administration. Fashioned after their traditional norms of political behaviour, the rebellion of the thakurs was built up on and sustained by their individual linkages, loyalties and identifiable patterns of political mobilisation. This made for a certain degree of fragmentation in the response of the thakurs to the movement of 1857,

* Thakur literally meant an individual entitled to reverence or respect, generally applied to a person of rank and authority, as a lord, a chief, the head of a tribe or of a village. It was a title commonly given to 'feudal nobles', usually Rajputs (Wilson, p.517). Bundela Rajputs in common parlance were called thakurs (Elliot, p.325). Strictly speaking, only ghariband landlords in Bundelkhand were entitled to the title, thakur. English records however use

the fragments uniting in rebellion to produce a concerted challenge to authority.

The rebellion of the thakurs evolved through phases that were related to trends of the entire movement. The zamindars in Banda and the thakurs of Chanderi and Jhansi rose in arms early in June 1857. The British control collapsed as mutiny and civil rebellion spread over all of Bundelkhand. While the British were driven out of towns, thanas and tahsils set up by them were uprooted from the countryside.

the term indiscriminately to mean any Rajput zamindar. In this chapter, it has been applied in its widest connotation to refer to a person commanding the subordination of others in the village either as a landlord or as a member of the family of the proprietary brotherhood. Overlaying differences in the rights and status of landed chiefs, thakurs here mean rural magnates of the rank of zamindars and above.

But the challenge that these rural uprisings mustered against authority was till now largely overshadowed by the concerted defiance of the sepoys who operated at a more organised level, concentrating on towns as centres of an alternate order.

It was on these towns that much of the attention of insurgency and counter-insurgency rested for the rest of 1857 and the first few months of 1858 in Bundelkhand. In this phase all resistance united in towns, posing the most formidable threat to the British. Towns became all the more crucial as forces from outside came crowding into this region to resist the recovery of the State. Retaining or regaining towns like Kalpi, Kunch, Jhansi and Banda became decisive issue for determining the success or failure of the movement.

The success of British counter-insurgency army in Bundelkhand in March 1858, ultimately smothered the forces of organised rebellion that revolved solely around the towns. All local potentates and soldiers were defeated and those who rallied around Tantiya Topi were driven out. The British thereafter, set out to reoccupy the district headquarters but their success failed to forestall rebellion in Bundelkhand. The challenge of resisting British return, was now taken up by Rajput thakurs and zamindars who revived the movement after April 1858. The resistance of these landed magnates in the village had so long furnished the backdrop to the movement; now they captured the centre of the stage. Different groups of thakurs rose to counter poise the spread of British control in the countryside. In the absence of a central political axis, their revolts were never brought together to a common

focus. The alternate power now rested diffused on villages and immediate localities rather than being concentrated on distant towns. But this power, drawing strength from local roots, stood up much longer to oppose the British.

The partial recovery of the British however, made a crucial difference. Once in occupation of the towns, British arms tried to reach out with greater impetus into the country. As they engulfed more and more areas, the political arena of rebellion became constricted and the leverage of actions for the people more constrained. The Rajputs were therefore, forced to leave their villages and band together around one person who turned leader to them and a 'notorious outlaw' for the English. While earlier rebels were identified in terms of their castes and villages, they now came to be singled out by the thakur who provided them leadership and organisation. The changed context altered the expression of their protest as well; open resistance turned into partisan warfare and guerilla resistance.

5.1 The beginning and spread of rebellion : June-December, 1857.

About the time that British administration was being brought to a state of collapse by the mutiny of soldiers in the district towns of Bundelkhand in June 1857, its control over the countryside was fatally undermined by the rebellion in the villages. The first rural uprising took place in the district of Banda, where it preceded the mutiny that expelled British officials from the station. Therefore, even while the officials were present in the town of Banda, the neighbouring country was up in arms in response to the news

of rebellion brought in by escaped prisoners from Allahabad, who entered the district by the Mow ferry. The first to rise were the zamindars of Mow, Purabputtai and Munkwar in pargana Chiboo. They along with few others of their villages and the police constables of the local thana, attacked the tahsildari at Mow. The tahsildar, thanadar and their amla were beseiged for a few days, till a zamindar from Allahabad came to their relief. All government property including buildings and records were plundered and destroyed. Thereafter, the zamindars paid their revenue to Narain Rao of Kirwi.¹ Following the example of Chiboo, government officials were driven out of parganas Augasi, Simoni, Buberu, Dursenda. The villages here, acknowledged the alternate rule of either Ali Bahadur or the Raos of Kirwi.² These were the earliest instances of civil uprisings in Bundelkhand and predicted the common strain that ran through all subsequent rural rebellions. Tahsildars and thanadars representing the lowest rungs of British administration were expelled, the records in their offices were destroyed and all treasure taken away.

In pargana Augasi, the landlords of Murka, Sungurra and Buberu actively participated early in June along with others of their villages in plundering the tahsildari and treasury

1. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the District of Banda, 1857-58. From F.O. Mayne, Magistrate & Collector of Banda To C. Chester, Commr. Allahabad Division, 11th Sept. 1857. Appendix A, pp. 337-340.

2. Ibid.

and in destroying all government records and buildings.³ The zamindars of of Punchneyi, a large kham village in pargana Simoni, like wise drove out the official Amin and destroyed his office.⁴ Sometime before the British left the district, the zamindars and inhabitants of mauza Pahari in the Dursenda pargana plundered and destroyed the thana, turned out the police and plundered the government rest house.⁵ Every pargana in district Banda witnessed such political reversal within the first fifteen days of June 1857.

The actions of the landed magnates in Banda, however, did not cease with the expulsion of Government officials. The initiative that they had acquired in the new political situation, presaged continuous actions. The zamindars of Murka in Augasi overran a number of neighbouring villages and even mustered forces in order to attack the town of Banda while the British were still there.⁶ Rajput zamindars of Bagha Chowsend in Budausa with four others of mauzas Tindora and Para in Seonda and Kurehi in Augasi banded together intending to attack and plunder the tahsildari at

3. Ibid, List of persons sentenced under the special Commission for the week ending 26th June 1858. From F.O.Mayne, Spl. Commr. 10th July 1858. Banda Coll. Records, Dept. XVIII, File No.41, Sl.No.39, Part I. (U.P.R.A.A.)

4. N.E., Banda, p. 338.

5. List of Persons sentenced for the week ending 4th Dec. 1858. From the Spl. Commr. Banda, Dec. 1858. Banda Coll. Records, File No.41(II). Spl. No.25, Dept. XVIII (U.P.R.A.A.)

6. List of person sentenced for the week ending 26th June 1858. From F.O. Mayne, Spl. Commr., 10th July 1858. Banda Coll. Records, Dept. XVIII, File No.41, Sl. No.39, Pt.I. (U.P.R.A.A.)

Budausa. Unable to do so, they looted the rich village of Orun in the same pargana.⁷ In Budausa again, zamindars and other inhabitants of Gurha, a village surrounded by ravines and situated on river Baghin, took to plundering travellers on the highway that ran through their mauza. They tried to stop British officials fleeing from Banda to Rewa.⁸ British fugitives from Nowgong were taken prisoners in Geora Mugli in pargana Banda by its zamindars and brought before the Nawab.⁹

The rebellion, however, did not evoke analogous responses from all landed magnates. Every pargana had some zamindars who kept away from and some who actually resisted the progress of rebellion. Thus, in pargana Dursenda while four lambardars of Kamasin rose with the other villagers to drive out the tahsildar, zamindars of an adjoining village Sanda, staunchly supported the latter. The tahsildar not only found shelter in Sanda, but received help from its zamindars and those of Chilowlur. With an auxiliary levy supplied by the latter two, he returned to Kamasin and burnt the village, not before he had overcome a still resistance.¹⁰ In Banda pargana, while Goera Mugli zamindars

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7. List of Persons sentenced for the week ending 4th Dec. 1858. From Spl. Commr. Banda, 7th Dec. 1858. Banda Coll. Records, Dept. XVIII, File No.41, Sl.No.25. (U.P.R.A.A.).
 8. List of Persons sentenced for the week ending 25th Dec. 1858. From the Spl. Commr. 31st Dec. 1858. Banda Coll. Records. Dept. XVIII, File No.41 (II), Sl.No.25 (U.P.R.A.A.).
 9. N.E., Banda, p. 339.
 10. Ibid, List of Persons sentenced for the week ending 18th Sept. 1858. Banda Coll. Records, Dept. XVII. File No.41 (I), Sl.No.39, Box No.4. (U.P.R.A.A.).

captured British fugitives, the landlords of Mattaned, Gureh and Jouroha remained, as the officials reports described, 'loyal'.¹¹ In Pailani, almost all villages actively participated in rebellion with the exception of Umrao Singh of Sindhan Pullan and Sumud Khan of Budeygaon.¹² Similarly, some zamindars of Chibu and those of Jhari in Simoni, stood by the tahsildar in decided opposition to the others in rebellion.¹³

Coming to Hamirpur, the uneven pattern of responses was duplicated. In the Romeri tahsil, the zamindars of Danda, Manjkhore, Serowli Buzurg and Khurd together began plundering and levying money on the neighbouring areas. This happened early in June, soon after some soldiers related to these zamindars, came home with the news of mutiny and the overthrow of the British elsewhere. Yet in the same pargana, G.H.Freeling the Collector and Magistrate of Hamirpur, later wrote about the zamindars of Thoke Terose as having 'behaved well'.¹⁴ Shortly after the mutiny in Hamirpur, Despat, a Bundela Rajput belonging to a family of lamdars in Jheejhan, the southern most village of pargana Panwari, turned out the police from the thana at Jheejhan, killed a barkandaz and

11. N.E., Banda, p. 339.

12. Ibid, p. 338.

13. Ibid, pp. 337-338.

14. Narrative of Events connected with the Mutiny at Hamirpur, 1857-58. By G.H.Freeling, Coll. & Magistrate, p.492. From C.Chester, Commr. 4th Divn. To Lt.Col. R.Strachey, 22nd Oct. 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch, 27th Nov. 1857, No.6. (N.A.I.).

thereafter, set out to bring the adjoining region under his control.¹⁵

British administration in Chanderi collapsed in the wake of thakur insurgency in the district. No sooner did the news about mutiny in Jhansi reach the district, than thakurs rose in arms. Collecting in large numbers, they surrounded the thanas of Chanderi, Talbehat and the district town of Lalitpur itself.¹⁶ A.C.Gordon, the Deputy Commissioner sent urgent notes to the Commissioner of Sagar and Narmada Territories, on 10th June 1857, "... I have the gravest fear for the Treasury and station. The Thakoors have surrounded us in such force and so near that at any moment they may make an attack on the place. The Troops up to the present appear quite loyal and I trust they will continue so".¹⁷ Thanas were evacuated as the police proved quite unable to prevent the thakurs from occupying the precincts of Lalitpur.¹⁸ Some of the more active thakurs were Mahip Singh, Chattersal, Bijja Bahadur and Kunwar Bahadur of Jacklone, Hamir Singh of Nanickpur and the Thakurs of Dongra.¹⁹

15. From Capt. T. Dunnehy, Dist. Suptd. of Hamirpur To the Magistrate of Hamirpur, n.d. For. Pol. A.Cons. July 1868, No.75 (N.A.I).

16. From Lt. A.C.Gordon, Dy. Commr. of Chandri To the Commr. Sagar & Narmada Terr. Jabalpur, 10th June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857, No. 237 (N.A.I).

17. Ibid.

18. From Gordon. To the Officer Commdg. detachment enroute to Lalitpur. Tehri 10th June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 18th Dec. 1857 No.237. (N.A.I).

19. From Capt. J.N.H.Maclean, Dy. Commr. of Chanderi To Capt. F.W.Pinkney, Suptd. of Jhansi, 1st May 1858. C.O.J. Sl.No.46, File No.39, Box No.11, Dept. XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

In Jhansi, thakurs reoccupied and reinforced their garhis and levied money over as large an area as they could.²⁰ The Puars of Kurrera pargana, who had been on the verge of rising before the mutiny in Jhansi, did so immediately, after it. They joined Sadashiv Rao, the rival claimant to the throne of Jhansi and getting together, turned the Indian officials from the fort of Kurrera.²¹

Kuchwaha Rajputs in Jalaun were among the first to join in the rebellion, before others took up the cue.²² Following them, Burjore Singh a Puar lambardar of Belawan, an old regulation village in pargana Kunch, took possession of a place called Ait in the south of Jalaun and collected revenue from the southern and western portions of the district.²³ Before long therefore, the entire country of Bundelkhand was swarmed with zamindars and thakurs individually or in groups, trying to reassert their power and authority.

20. Trans. of a Kharita from the Rani of Jhansi to the address of the Commr. & Agent Lt. Gov. Sagar Divn. 14th June 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857. Pt.II. No.354 (N.A.I.).

21. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the Division of Jhansi in 1857-58. By J.W.Pinkney, Commr. 20th Nov. 1858. p. 514.

22. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the district of Jalaun in 1857-58. From Capt. A.H.Ternan, Dy. Commr. of Jalaun To Capt. F.W. Pinkney, Commr. of the Jhansi Division, Kalpi, 12th June 1858, p. 496.

23. From Lt. Col. A.H.Ternan, Dy. Commr. Jalaun To Lt. Col. B.P.Lloyd. Commr. Jhansi, Orai, 28th June 1869. C.O.J. Box No.13, File No.112, Sl.No.81. (U.P.R.A.A.).

5.2 Interaction with the broader trend of the movement.

January - April 1858.

There is little evidence to suggest that the rebellion of the landed magnates at the time of its beginning, was directly associated with the mutiny of soldiers. The mutiny was crucial for the uprising of the thakurs in so far as it heralded the crisis for authority; and this crisis was the immediate factor that activated the protest of the zamindars. But neither the soldiers nor the Rajas were really concerned about mobilising the rural magnates. Nor did the landlords in the early stages of rebellion, move out of their country to the towns in order to coordinate their actions with those of the soldiers or the Rajas. The two sections of people operated independently and both shared a certain sense of exclusion from the other. The zamindars of Banda or the thakurs of Jhansi and Chanderi, Despat or Burjore Singh assumed political control over their immediate and often, surrounding regions, without any reference to the activities in towns. In Banda, Ali Bahadur and the Raos of Kirwi were able to impose revenue over the countryside for sometime. In the other districts, the powerful thakurs themselves collected revenue and there was no question of any of the local potentates laying claims on them. Nowhere in the countryside in June 1857, was the rule of Laxmi Bai or Ali Bahadur or even Mardan Singh proclaimed, not to speak of Nana Sahib or Bahadur Shah. On the contrary, at moments of interaction in course of the movement, the difference between thakurs and soldiers or Rajas, between country and towns, sometimes surfaced through friction. In

Chanderi, thakurs under Mardan Singh drove the soldiers out of Lalitpur.²⁴ When Kunwar Singh reached Banda at the head of soldiers of the 40th Native Infantry Regiment, he was attacked and repulsed by some zamindars of the district near a place called Kapsa in the South.²⁵ Mutual distrust between the thakurs and the forces in the town left a hiatus of incompatibility, forbidding any dialogue or comprehension by one of the other. In one of his letters to Nana Sahib, Ali Bahadur wrote about the Bundelas being "... on the side of the enemy and that nothing else but the infliction of signal punishment on them would overawe Bundelkhand".²⁶ In the Nawab's perception, any alliance with the thakurs was ruled out. The Puars were in continuous occupation of a village Talaur, north of Jhansi district, from the very beginning of the movement. They also undertook occasional raids on the surrounding area. Around January 1858, the rebel forces in Jalaun under the direction of Tantya Topi sent a certain Budh Singh as their representative Jamadar to this region of Puar stronghold. Budh Singh with some men set up a thana in Talaur. In retaliation, the Puars calling all their own men from different places burned down the village. Open

24. From Maj. W.C.Erskine, Commr. & Agent Lt. Governor Sagar Div, To G.F.Edmonstone, Jabalpur, 22nd June 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 31st July 1857, No.329 (N.A.I).

25. From R.R.W.Ellis, Pol. Asstt. for Bundelkhand To G.F.Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Nagpur, 6th Nov. 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 27th Nov. 1857, No.145 (N.A.I).

26. Trans. of a letter from Ali Bahadur to Nana Sahib, Banda, 23rd Feb. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Suppl. No.643 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., pp. 238-239.

confrontation broke out between them and the men from Jalaun. The latter soon had to retreat to the fort in Jalaun.²⁷ This was a typical instance of the thakurs' reaction to intervention and imposition from outside.

As scattered mutinies in different districts graduated into a coordinated movement, widening their net works of linkages and alignments, it was able to draw within its vortex, protests of the thakurs. The need to coordinate the actions of people at different levels was driven home by the haunting presentiment of the return of British power in Bundelkhand. The common adversary in the English, brought together the soldiers, the Rajas and the thakurs, to stage a common resistance to counter-insurgency forces. The appearance of British troops in Bundelkhand early in 1858, forced new patterns of realignments that overlaid former differences. It was first in Chanderi that the thakurs rallied around the Rajas of Shahghar and Banpur to mobilise a determined opposition to British forces. Mardan Singh called upon the thakurs of Chanderi and told them that he was their well-wisher but if they wished to surrender and deliver the Raja to the British, the latter would comply with their command. The thakurs instantly took oaths to support Mardan Singh against the British and fight till the end.²⁸ Different thakurs were thereafter, deputed at

27. From R.Hamilton, Agent Gov. Gen. for Central India To R.Strachey, Secy. to Govt. Central Prov. Allahabad, Camp Bagrode, 23rd Jan 1858. News from Bundelkhand, 5th Jan. For. Sec.Cons. 25th June 1858. No.115 (N.A.I).

28. Abstract of Intelliance from Tehri, 10th Feb. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 26th March 1858, No.42 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., p. 250.

various points to set up pickets. Mahipat Singh, the thakur of Jacklone went to Malthone with about 1,200 men.²⁹ The Thakurs of Cholaيرا waited with fifty men over the pass at Kukargaon. A group of soldiers from Jhansi attacked the thakurs here and in the scuffle that ensued both sides lost about twelve men.³⁰ In all the major battles that Hugh Rose had to fight in Chanderi, it was fundamentally the resistance of the thakurs and not the Rajas or soldiers, that he had had to overcome. As a matter of fact, on the eve of the conflict with the British, Bakht Bali, Raja of Shahgarh, wished to proceed to Sagar and submit. It was the thakurs and Mardan Singh who stopped him from doing so. The thakurs of Chanderi, Shahgarh and some from Bijawar took oaths to fight to the last.³¹

Once Chanderi was taken by Hugh Rose, the attention of rebellion and counter - rebellion turned to Jhansi. It was to Jhansi therefore, that the thakurs with Mardan Singh moved, after being defeated in Chanderi.³² The thakurs provided the bulk of the force that gathered in the town and according to one official report, it was they who tried to convince Laxmi Bai that the Europeans would no longer be

29. Ibid.

30. Abstract of Intelligence from Tehri, 11th Feb. 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 30th April 1858, Nos.130-33. (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 251-254.

31. Abstract of Intelligence from Tehri, 21st Feb. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, No.135 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., pp. 255-256.

32. Abstract of Intelligence, Jhansi, 16th March 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858. No.147 (N.A.I). F.S.U.P., pp. 290-291.

found in India.³³ In defence of rebellion, several thakurs came forward and, moving out of their immediate area, they gathered in different towns. The Puars of Kurrera who till January 1858, had maintained an independent and isolated pocket of strength over the surrounding area,³⁴ joined the rest of the force in Jhansi soon after.³⁵ Early in February, the Thakur of Baitha and sons of the Jagirdar of Alipura in Jhansi, joined the rebel forces at a place called Dhama-kur. The former had one and the latter two guns with 500 men. Together they planned to attack Mau on the 15th of February.³⁶ A number of thakurs like Despat of Jheejhan in Hamirpur, Bakht Singh of Alipura in Jhansi, Dowlat Singh of Indurki, Burjore Singh of Belawan, Jowahar Singh of Katili in Jalaun and the Udgaon thakurs of Chanderi actively participated in the struggle between rebellion and authority over the mastery of Bundelkhand. Just before the battle in Jhansi, the town had some 7,000 rebels fortifying it. Among them about 1,500 were soldiers; the rest were thakurs and their retainers.³⁷

33. News from Bundelkhand, 5th Jan. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858. No.115 (N.A.I). It was reported that there were 400 soldiers with the Rani at Jhansi. The rest of the force was composed of the retainers of the surrounding thakurs.

34. Ibid.

35. Abstract of Intelligence from Tehri, 11th Feb. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, Nos.130-133, No.265 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 251-254.

36. Ibid.

37. Abstract of Intelligence, Alipura, 16th March 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858. No.147 (N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 295-297.

Despat came in touch with Tantya Topi when the latter was marching with his forces at the end of January, against Charkhari that lay a little north of Jheelhan. It can be gathered from a letter which Despat wrote to Tantya Topi, that the former was deputed to resist the march of British army into Bundelkhand from the South. In his letter, Despat spoke of the information he had received about Major Ellis having left Panna for Jhansi, and he himself intended to fall upon British forces and annihilate them.³⁸ Despat accompanied Tantya Topi along with the Rajas of Banpur and Shahghar to Charkhari³⁹ and furnished 4,000 men for the proposed attack upon Hugh Rose's army in Jhansi. Interestingly, he commanded the largest contingent after Tantya.⁴⁰ The Jheelhan thakur was with Tantya Topi right through till the battle of Burwa Sagar. Following their defeat at Burwa Sagar in March 1858, the rebel forces dispersed and Despat returned to Hamirpur. In April, General Whitlock marching from the south upon Bundelkhand attacked and burnt the village of Jheelhan. Despat escaped, but some of his followers and relatives were taken prisoners.⁴¹

38. Trans. of Despat's letter to Tanta ya Topi, n.d.
For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, Nos. 151-155 (N.A.I.).

39. Abstract of Intelligence from Tahrole, 18th March 1858. For. Sec.Cons. 30th April 1858, Nos.146-147. (N.A.I.).

40. News furnished by the Killadar of Pitha, 28th March 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, Nos.122-123 (N.A.I.).

41. Intelligence of 19th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858. Nos.171-172 (N.A.I.).

On the 6th of April 1858, Burjore Singh of Belawan occupied Bhandere, a small town in Jhansi with hundred men. Preventing anyone from deserting the place, Burjore Singh had it proclaimed by the beat of drums that Tantya Topi leading twenty-two regiments was about to attack British forces.⁴² Burjore Singh was present in Kunch with the other Rajputs,⁴³ and like most others stayed on with the rest of the force till the battle of Kalpi.

The period of cooperation between the thakurs and the soldiers roughly stretched from January 1858 to May 1858. It was not, however, one totally free of occasional tensions. After the battle over Madanpur Pass in Chanderi, "The sepoys and the Bundelas quarrelled, the former declaring that the latter had run away and left them to fight the Pass; general mistrust, and a panic ensued ..." ⁴⁴ -The soldiers returned to Jhansi and reiterated the allégation, further asserting that they would not take service with the Bundela Chiefs" ... should they even propose to give them one Re per day per

42. From R.Hamilton, Agent to the Gov. Gen. for C. India To G.F.Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Jhansi, 14th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858. Nos.132-133 (N.A.I).

43. Intelligence, dated 1st May 1858. News of 27th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858. Nos.82-83 (N.A.I).

44. Govt. Gazette, N.W.P. Vol.I, No.XV, Allahabad, Tuesday, June 1, 1858. pp. 154-160. From Maj. Gen. H.Rose To Maj. Gen. Mansfield, Chief of the Staff, Camp before Jhansi, 26th March 1858. F.S.U.P., pp. 302-305.

man" ⁴⁵ The final straw was the defeat of the rebels at Kalpi on 9th May 1858. The confederacy broke ⁴⁶ and while Tantya Topi and the soldiers proceeded towards Gwalior, the thakurs returned to their own regions. The curtain opened to a new phase of rebellion in Bundelkhand.

5.3 Thakurs in rebellion from May 1858.

Hardly had Rose's back turned on Chanderi, when the Bundelas there once again rose up in arms. On the 11th of May, the thana at Lalitpur was attacked and the police put to death. Next the thana at Bansi, a little north of Lalitpur was taken. ⁴⁷ On the 13th of May, the thakurs stormed the fort at Chanderi, drove out the Scindia's troops, captured their guns and occupied the place. ⁴⁸ By the end of May, the entire sub-division of Chanderi had gone back to the thakurs with the exception of the thana at Banpur. ⁴⁹ On the 27th of May, they, however, evacuated the fort of Chanderi when a British column occupied it. ⁵⁰ The principal

45. Abstract of Intelligence, Jhansi, 7th March 1858.
For. Sec. Cons. 30th April 1858, Nos.144-145.
(N.A.I), F.S.U.P., p. 286.

46. From R. Hamilton to G.F.Edmonstone, Camp Kalpi 24th May 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 10th Sept. 1858, No.103.
(N.A.I) F.S.U.P., pp. 380-382.

47. From Capt. F.W.Pinkney, Suptd. of Jhansi To W.Muir, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Allahabad, 16th May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June, 1858. No.127(N.A.I).

48. From Capt. F.O.Mayne, Commdg. Irregular Horse To Maj. Macpherson, Pol.Agent Gwalior, Goonah, 6 p.m. 14th May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, Nos.256-257 (N.A.I).

49. Narrative of Important Events for the week ending 31st May 1858. Jhansi Div. For. Pol. Cons. 3rd Sept. 1858. No.17 (N.A.I).

50. Ibid.

thakurs to lead the uprising here were, Ranjit Singh and Debi Singh of Dongra, Hamir Singh of Pali and Mahip Singh of Jacklone.

North of Chanderi, in Jhansi, thakurs were seen collecting together forces in the region between Kalpi and Jhansi around the middle of May.⁵¹ The town of Mote was attacked and plundered, the tahsil and thana were destroyed and the officials driven out.⁵² On the 23rd of May, Debi Singh and Buldeo Singh led an attack against the town of Atta. The revenue office and the police post were destroyed and all government officials turned out.⁵³ The thakurs in this district were mobilised by Chattar Singh a resident of Kukroi,⁵⁴ Bakht Singh of Alipura and Jowahar Singh of Katili.⁵⁵

51. From F.W.Pinkney, To W.Muir, Camp. Kalpi, 28th May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858. No.134. (N.A.I).

52. From E.C.Bayley To G.F.Edmonstone, Allahabad, 10th June 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82, 1858 (U.P.S.A.L).

53. Narrative of Imp. Events for the week ending 31st May 1858. Jhansi Divn. For. Pol. Cons. 3rd Sept. 1858. No.17. (N.A.I).

54. News of 6th June 1859, Urdu-Persian Records, Jhansi Basta No.4. Sl.No.14 (U.P.R.A.A.).

55. News of 1st Feb. 1860. Urdu-Persian Records, Jhansi, Basta No.5, Sl.No.95 (U.P.R.A.A.).

Jalaun was also practically given over to rebellion. Here Dowlat Singh, a Kuchwaha thakur of Indurki and Burjore Singh of Belawan emerged as Chiefs commanding large bodies of men. F.W.Pinkney, Commissioner of Jhansi Division wrote in alarm, "Burjore Singh of Belawan, south east of Kunch is at the head of a large body of plunderers save where the British Forces are, the Jalaun district is in great disorder and people in some parts particularly round Kalpi have shown a strong feeling against the British." ⁵⁶ Dowlat Singh, a Jamadar of Kuchwahagar had been detected early as a leading rebel at the head of a number of men and soldiers; and an award of Rs.2,000 was offered in May 1858 for his capture. ⁵⁷ After the departure of the soldiers the Kuchwahas left to themselves, continued to protest. Twenty-three Kuchwaha thakurs were charged with rebellion by the British. ⁵⁸ Their leadership was taken up by Dowlat Singh.

Insurgency spread apace with instances of British reoccupation being neutralised by the success of the thakurs in negating them. Early in June, Burjore Singh and his forces were surprised and defeated by a British detachment. This immediately led three thakurs of Bheyr, Ameeta and Baroda in Jalaun to surrender themselves to the British. ⁵⁹

56. From F.W.Pinkney To W.Muir, Camp. Kalpi, 28th May 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858, No.134 (N.A.I).

57. News of 24th May 1858. C.O.J. Sl.No.3, File No.93, Dept.XXI. 1862 (U.P.R.A.A.).

58. From A.M.Montoath, Offg. Secy. to the Govt. of the N.W.P. To the Commr. of Jhansi, Allahabad, 3rd Dec. 1859. C.O.J. Box No.9, Sl.No.23, File No.70 (U.P.R.A.A.).

59. Narrative of Events from the 31st of May to the 7th of June 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 27th Aug. 1858, No.131 (N.A.I) From F.W.Pinkney To W.Muir, Camp near Mote, 5th June 1858. For. Sec.Cons. 27th Aug. 1858. No.132 (N.A.I).

The British hoped that conditions in the district would stabilise. Their hopes were belied by a massive concentration of thakurs in the country between the Betwa and Dhasan rivers, where lay the three tahsils of Garota, Pundwaha and Mau.⁶⁰ Despat occupied a fort at Kashipur, a town on the river Dhasan on the border of Jhansi and Hamirpur.⁶¹ A little later in June, the town and fort of Mau Ranipur were captured by insurgents under Chattar Singh.⁶² "The Tehsildar and Thannadar who for sometime defended themselves in the fort were given up to the rebels by their own garrison which was composed of the retainers furnished by friendly Thakoors and Zamindars".⁶³ The tahsildars of Pundwaha and Gurotha were forced to evacuate their respective stations⁶⁴ and Gursrai was attacked by a large body of rebels.⁶⁵ The news of the mutiny in Gwallor, provided added impetus to the

60. From F.W.Pinkey, Jhansi, 14th June 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 6th Aug. 1858, No.189 (N.A.I).

61. From the Pol. Asstt. for Bundelkhand To G.F.Edmonstone, Camp Banda, 25th June, 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 27th Aug. 1858. No.57 (N.A.I).

62. From G.Couper, Secy. to the Govt. of N.W.P. To Maj. F.W.Pinkney, Camp. Kanpur, 9th Jan. 1861. C.O.J. Basta No.85(ii) Sl.No.7, File No.88, Dept. XXI, 1861 (U.P.R.A.A).

63. From F.W.Pinkney, Jhansi, 21st June 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 6th Aug. 1858. No.187 (N.A.I).

64. Ibid.

65. From E.C.Bayley To G.F.Edmonstone, Allahabad, 1st July 1858. Narrative of Events from 31st May to 7th June 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No. 77, Vol.82, 1858. (U.P.S.A.L.).

thakurs. Those who might have surrendered to authority, now girded up for resisting it.⁶⁶ A large body of rebels were seen assembling at Rajghat on the Betwa, about half-way between Chanderi and Lalitpur and other bands moving about the district.⁶⁷

Thakurs surrounded the town of Jalaun late in June 1858. The Commissioner reported with alarm, "Jalaun is in the centre of the district surrounded by turbulent and disaffected Thakurs nearly every one of whom has a mud fort. An enemy in possession of Jalaun could raise all the country round and open direct communication with the rebels between the rivers Dhasan and Betwa".⁶⁸ Meanwhile in Jhansi, Jowahar Singh of Katili and Bakht Singh of Alipura together compelled the Deputy Commissioner, Capt. Maclean to leave the station in June 1858. Jhansi was reoccupied by the British at the end of August. But the thakurs once again rose to expel the Government in October 1858.⁶⁹

The resistance of the thakurs was certainly a formidable challenge in the way of the British, reasserting their authority over Bundelkhand, and it was not till quite late

66. From Capt. N.H.Maclean, Dy. Commr. of Chanderi, 12th June 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 6th Aug. 1858. Nos.189-190 (N.A.I).

67. From F.W.Pinkney, To W. Muir, Jhansi, 23rd June 1858. C.O.J. Box No.7, Sl.No.10, File No.153, Dept.XIII. (U.P.R.A.A.).

68. From F.W.Pinkney To W. Muir, Jhansi, 27th June 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 27th Aug. 1858. No.184 (N.A.I).

69. Govt. Vs. Jowahar Singh, Thakur of Katili, Jhansi, 11th Feb. 1860. Urdu - Persian Records, Jhansi, Basta No.5, Sl.No.95 (U.P.R.A.A.).

in 1859 that they were able to bring the country around. But the British reoccupation of the principal towns, their assertive presence all over northern India and their decidedly superior military and financial means altered the situation for the thakurs. British arms came heavily against the thakurs, determined to break their organisation, narrow down their sphere of actions, and eventually smother their resistance. The thakurs fought till the end but progressively they had to fall back on the defensive. Several among them were crushed, caught, punished and quite a few surrendered. Yet many remained to continue the tradition of resistance. Unable to do so individually, they banded together accepting the leadership and guidance of one among them. Driven constantly by British forces, the thakurs had to be always on the move, scampering across the country from one place to another. They could no longer sustain a concerted, organised and well-knit pattern of actions. Sporadic raid, sudden attacks and surprise marches now characterized their protests. They were pushed further and further away from the open country and forced to seek shelter in hills, ravines or neighbouring independent states. Eventually they were compelled to be on the run. The reasserted British authority and its systematic drive to crush the thakurs, ultimately came to stay over the thakurs' united bid for freedom.

5.3.1 Burjore Singh.

Late in June 1858, Burjore Singh moved to western Jalaun and with 2,000 matchlockmen set himself up in the fort of Mau, a village on river Pahuj in the Lahar tahsil, thirteen miles west of Kunch. He put up his own flag over

the region. Mohipat Singh, the kanungo of Lahar joined him and on Burjore Singh's behalf collected revenue. Men were sent also to the neighbouring village of Parichha.⁷⁰ It was with this region as his new centre of operations, that the Puar set out to direct his actions. He intended to attack and capture the town of Jalaun. But before doing so, he proceeded to extend his sway over the entire area in the west of the district. He deployed soldiers to the adjoining villages of Alampur, Sachohi, in order to surround the entire pargana of Deva, of which Lahar formed a part. People were asked to provide provisions, with the threat that if they refused to do so, they would be plundered.⁷¹ Ransoms were demanded from the zamindars and the rais (rich men). On the 8th of July, 50 Afghan cavalrymen and 200 Hindustani musketeers from Gwalior joined Burjore Singh's force in the village of Parichha.⁷²

Actively participating with this thakur, were Jowahar Singh, Gulab Singh, Rudr Singh, Anrud Singh and Achurju, five Rajput zamindars of Jalaun.⁷³ Burjore Singh was also supported

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70. From Sayyid Munawar Ali, Thanadar Deva, 7th July 1858. Urdu - Persian Records, Jalaun, Basta No.1, File No.1 (U.P.R.A.A.); From Lt. Col. Liddell, Comdg. at Jhansi To the Asstt. Quarter - Master Gen., C.India, Field Force, Jhansi, 1st July 1858, C.O.J. Box No.12, Sl.No.66, File No.12 (U.P.R.A.A.).
71. From Sayyid Munawar Ali, Thanadar Deva, 7th July 1858. Urdu-Persian Records, Jalaun, Basta No.1, File No.1. (U.P.R.A.A.)
72. From Naib tahsildar Indurki, 10th July 1858. Urdu-Persian Records, Jalaun, Basta No.1, File No.1 (U.P.R.A.A.).
73. From J.N.H.Maclean To F.W.Pinkney, Camp. Mau, 4th Sept. 1858. C.O.J. Box No.11, Sl.No.49, File No.34, Dept. XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

by Dowlat Singh, the Kuchwaha thakur of Indurki, who led an equally large body of forces. The two Thakur Chiefs joined each other in June 1858.⁷⁴ Together, they encamped close to Madhogarh, a town 15 miles north west of Jalaun in Kuchwahagar. They posted men at strategic places and tried to muster as much resource as they could from other local zamindars and thakurs before beginning their assault on Madhogarh.⁷⁵

At 9 in the morning of 26th July, Burjore Singh with 500 men came before Madhogarh. The Deputy Magistrate and the thanadar arrived with their forces and their encounter with Burjore Singh began at the garhi. The fight continued till midday with few injuries on both sides. In the midst of the contest, some of the thakurs' men entered the town from another side and plundered the tahsil office, leaving behind some papers only. It was said, that Dowlat Singh had been waiting outside Madhogarh. All left the place soon after.⁷⁶

On the 29th of July, Burjore Singh occupied Kunch after defeating 500 men furnished by the Chief of Gurserai, capturing their two guns and turning them out of the town. He himself headed a force of over 2,000 men. In this manner

74. From Thanadar of Deva, 12th June 1858. Urdu-Persian Records, Jalaun, Basta No.1, File No.1. (U.P.R.A.A.).

75. From Bholanath, 18th July 1858 & From Thanadar of Madhogarh, 26th July 1858. Urdu-Persian Records Jalaun, Basta No.5, File No.124 (U.P.R.A.A.).

76. Ibid.

nearly the entire western half of the Jalaun district came under the control of Burjore Singh, Dowlat Singh and their men.⁷⁷

The next town to fall to Burjore Singh was Jalaun. They arrived before the town at 11 in the morning of 2nd August. Sepoys who had been posted to guard the garhi, opened the gates and joined the thakur's forces and the fort was captured.⁷⁸ On the advance of a British detachment the following day, however, Burjore Singh evacuated Jalaun and his forces along with those of Dowlat Singh, once again assembled at Madhogarh and Mau Mahoni.⁷⁹

The gradual spread of British arms over Jalaun pushed Burjore Singh ^{more} and/to the west of the district. On the 15th of September in 1858, he suddenly came to Duboh a village on the borders of Jalaun and Gwalior with a thousand men, plundered the place, set them on fire, and then returned to Mau.⁸⁰ Till the end of 1858 and for sometime in 1859, Burjore Singh and Dowlat Singh retained their control over Kuchwahagar and the surrounding regions in western Jalaun.⁸¹

77. From F.W.Pinkney To W.Muir, 5th Aug. 1858. Mil. Progs. 3rd Sept. 1858, No.454 (N.A.I).

78. From Dy. Magistrate, Kunwar Daraz Ali, 31st July 1858. Urdu-Persian Records, Jalaun. Basta No.1, File No.2 (U.P.R.A.A.).

79. Narrative for the week ending 15th Aug. 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77. Vol.82, 1858 (U.P.S.A.L.).

80. From R. Hamilton To F.W.Pinkney, 25th Sept. 1858. C.O.J. Box No.12. Sl.No.69, File No.8 (U.P.R.A.A.).

81. From F.W.Pinkney To W.Muir, 22nd Nov. 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, No.17 (N.A.I).

In May 1859, A.H.Ternan, the Deputy Commissioner of Jalaun reported that Burjore Singh was still at the head of a large body of rebels, realising revenue in the neighbourhood of Kunch.⁸²

The gradual spread of British control, progressively undermined the alternate authority that Burjore Singh and Dowlat Singh had been able to build and retain for so long. 1859 found them having retreated into the Datia and Sampthar territories. They took shelter in the ravines of the Sind river and the two leaders were forced to split into separate bands again.⁸³ Their resistance however still continued. From open encounters with the British, the thakurs resorted to partisan warfare leading forays into British territories as often as they could. On the morning of 9th May 1859, Burjore Singh came to Talgaon, some ten miles away from Duboh early around 8 o'clock, killed a police constable and wounded another. By the time British force arrived, the thakur had left, possibly on being tipped off in good time, for he hurriedly escaped without looting any of the inhabitants in the town.⁸⁴

82. From Capt. A.H.Ternan, Dy.Commr. Jalaun To F.W. Pinkney, Camp. Kalpi, 25th May 1859. C.O.J. Box No.10, Sl.No.39, File No.49, Dept.XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

83. From Camp. Duboh, 9th May 1859. C.O.J. Basta No.11. Sl.No.56, File No.24, Dept. XXI. From H.Morton, Dy. Commr. Jhansi To J.N.H.Maclean, Camp Mahoba, 12th Oct. 1859. C.O.J. Basta No.115 (iii) Sl.No.41, File No.46, Dept. XXI. (U.P.R.A.A.).

84. From Lt. MacInray To Capt. Maclean, Camp Duboh, 9th May 1859. C.O.J. Box No.11, Sl.No.56, File No.24, Dept. XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

In May 1859, the Government announced a reward of Rs.2,000 for the apprehension of Burjore Singh.⁸⁵ But the Thakur, continued to elude the English. On a tour around Kuchwahagar, J.N.Maclean the Deputy Commissioner of Jalaun found that in a number of villages, especially those that belonged to Dowlat Singh, there was no cultivation because the latter had "... given it out, that he will murder any one who cultivates or lives in any of his villages".⁸⁶ Till the end of 1859, Burjore Singh and Dowlat Singh continued their raids into British districts, baffling every effort of the government's well organised police and espionage systems.

After remaining in concealment for ten years, Burjore Singh once again as late as in 1868 raided his village of Belawan and killed two persons. In 1860, the village had been ^{over}made/to the two sons of the Rao of Gurserai.⁸⁷

Rumours spread about Burjore Singh's death but they remained unconfirmed.⁸⁸ The feared rebel never submitted to authority.

Sometime before September 1859, Dowlat Singh had applied to the officiating political Agent at Gwalior, to enquire about the terms that he be granted if he surrendered. The

85. From A. H. Ternan To F.W.Pinkney, Camp. Kalpi, 25th May 1859. C.O.J. Sl.No.39, File No.49 Dept. XXI (U.P.R.A.A.)

86. From J.N.H.Maclean To F.W.Pinkney, Camp Lahar, 20th Sept. 1859. C.O.J. Sl.No.39, File No.49, Dept.XXI. (U.P.R.A.A.).

87. From A.H.Ternan To B.P.Lloyd, Commr. Jhansi Div. 28th June 1869. C.O.J. Box No.13, Sl.No.81, File No.112 (U.P.R.A.A.).

88. Ibid.

British refused any reconsideration of the terms already stipulated in the Queen's Proclamation and Amnesty.⁸⁹

Dowlat Singh's estates had been confiscated early in 1858.⁹⁰ The Kuchwaha thakur resumed resistance in 1859.

By 1860, he was pushed further west and then forced to move south. His incursions were thereafter, undertaken in the Jhansi and Chanderi districts. On the night of 21st March that year, Dowlat Singh destroyed a great portion of collected grain in the village Dowa in Marora pargana of Chanderi and the same night, repeated the act of mouza Waldauna, a little north of the pargana. On the 30th, Dowlat Singh went up to Garota, east of Lalitpur and burnt grain in a village called Barota.⁹¹ He finally gave himself up in 1871 and pleaded innocence.⁹² The British now had little to fear and judiciously acquitted him.⁹³

5.3.2 Despat.

All the while Burjore Singh and Dowlat Singh had been operating in Western Bundelkhand, Hamirpur and parts of eastern Jhansi were kept alive to thakur actions by the most

89. From J.N.Maclean To S. Couper, Secy. to the Govt. of N.W.P. Camp Gopalpura, 16th Sept. 1859. C.O.J. Basta No.8.5(ii) Sl.No.9. File No.96 (U.P.R.A.A.).

90. From A.H.Ternan, To F.W.Pinkney, Kalpi, 28th July 1858. C.O.J. Basta No.11, Sl.No.42, File No.45, Dept.XXI of 1859 (U.P.R.A.A.).

91. From Lt. W.G.B. Tyler, Offg. Dy. Commr. Lalitpur To F.W.Pinkney, Camp Sursood, 27th March 1860. C.O.J. Box No.15, Sl.No.106, File No.173 Dept.XXI. 1860 (U.P.R.A.A.).

92. State Vs. Dowlat Singh. Urdu-Persian Records, Jalaun Basta No.2, Sl.No.5, File No.5 (U.P.R.A.A.).

93. Ibid.

celebrated rebel and certainly the most notorious in British estimate, Despat, the Bundela Rajput from Jheelham. After occupying the Kashipur garhi in June, Despat moved south to Mau Ranipur and joined Chattar Singh the Thakur of Kukarbai in Jhansi as was reported around the end of July 1858.⁹⁴ From here, the two thakurs proceeded north towards Gurserai with about 2,000 men. Waiting around Gurserai, were two other bands of men, one about 800 strong under a certain Jagjit and the other comprising mostly of fugitives from Gwalior.⁹⁵ Despat, however, did not stay long in Jhansi but returned to Hamirpur moving south towards Jaitpur. The entire contiguous tract between Mau Ranipur and Jaitpur, was now up in arms as all the local thakurs rose to defy British authority.⁹⁶

From August 1858, Despat's operations were directed solely in Hamirpur, his efforts now being to bring more and more of the district in the south under his control. Early in the month, 40 to 50 of his gunmen were posted over the thana of Panwari and there were 250 other men deployed over the entire tahsil. Despat himself was in the village Seonda.⁹⁷ A little to the east, the roads around Mahoba were occupied

94. From E.C.Bayley To G.F.Edmonstone, 24th July 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sb.No.77, Vol.No.82, 1858 (U.P.S.A.L.).

95. Ibid.

96. From E.C.Bayley To G.F.Edmonstone, 6th Aug. 1858. Narrative of Imp. Events for the week ending 25th July 1858 and the week ending 1st Aug. 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.No.82, 1858 (U.P.S.A.L.).

97. Statement of Banta Basor, 4th Aug. 1858. Urdu-Persian Records, Hamirpur, Basta No.8, Sl.No.10, (U.P.R.A.A.).

by 500 men belonging to Despat and his fraternity .⁹⁸

Towards the end of August, the Bundela moved north and assembled his men at the town of Rath. He was accompanied by his younger brother, Nanhey Dewan and Chattar Singh of Kukerbai both commanding a significant contingent each, the strength of forces all the three mustered thereby, totalling to an impressive 3,000.⁹⁹ On the 20th of August 1858, Despat formally proclaimed his rule with the announcement, Khalq Khoda Ki, Mulk Badshah Ka, Raj Peshwa Ka and Hukm Despat Ka, (The world is God's, the country is Badshah's the kingdom is Peshwa's the rule is Despat's.) that was read out in different villages. His followers planted the flags of their own region and formalised the occasion by feeding 700 brahmins. Nearly eight to ten thousand men gathered in Rath to commemorate the occasion of the inauguration of their kingdom to be ruled by their own king.¹⁰⁰ By October 1858, Despat and his associates had driven out Government establishments from the three parganas in Hamirpur, Jaitpur, Panwari and Rath.¹⁰¹ The British regime ceased to exist once again.

98. From F.O.Mayne, Magistrate Banda To R.R.W.Ellis, Pol. Asstt. for Bundelkhand, Camp Chattarpur, 14th Aug. 1858. For. Pol.Cons. 5th Nov. 1858. No.49 (N.A.I.).

99. From R.R.W.Ellis To G.F.Edmonstone, Chattarpur, 25th Aug. 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 31st Dec. 1858, No.2150 (N.A.I.).

100. Thanadar of Islampur, reporting from Jalalpur, n.d. Urdu-Persian Records, Hamirpur, Basta No.8, Sl. No.10, File No.10 (U.P.R.A.A.).

101. Narrative of Events for the week ending 25th Oct. 1859. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82, 1858. (U.P.S.A.L.).

The resistance of the thakurs, however, could not long hold back the progress of British arms. Early in 1859, British authority was reestablished over most of Hamirpur and Despat retreated south beyond the district into a village called Geree in the Kishangarh pargana of the Chattarpur State. His followers and lieutenants remained about Jheejhan.¹⁰² The area where Despat and his men were strongly entrenched consisted of a lone range of hills stretching vertically from Mowaband in Jaitpur to nearly Nowgong in the south, beyond the borders of Bundelkhand. Jheejhan stood almost in the middle of the range. The whole face of the hill was covered with dense forest, extending right/^{up}to its foot, which was extremely thick at certain points.¹⁰³

From this base of operations, Despat and his men engineered incursions into the surrounding British territories. From open insurrection, their protest turned to irregular fighting and occasional raids undertaken by small groups of men. One of their first charge in 1859 was against five villages belonging to the Jagirdar of Logassi who was noted for his loyalty to the British. The villages were plundered, burnt and from each of them,^{women} were carried away.¹⁰⁴ Recollecting the incident in 1862, an English

102. From J.P.Stratton, Pol. Asstt. for Bundelkhand To Maj. R.T.Meade, Agent Gov. Gen. for C.India, Nowgong, 5th Dec. 1862. For. Pol. Cons. A.Jan. 1863. Nos.95-97 (N.A.I).

103. From J.B.Outram, Asstt. Secy. to the Govt. of N.W.P. To Gen. Sir W.R.Mansfield, Chief of the Staff, Allahabad, 9th March 1859. For. Pol. Progs. 12th Aug. 1859. No.82 (N.A.I).

104. From J.B.Outram, Asstt. Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. To W.R.Mansfield, Chief of the Staff, 9th March 1859, Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.3, Sl. No.64, File No.89, Dept.XII. (U.P.R.A.A.).

official reported, "... Despat himself appeared on the field. On that occasion he went down the banks of the Cane (ken) River to where it is joined by Omri Nuddee and for 4 days he and his people were fed by the Chutterpur villages of Pulkwa and Kerianee. Thence he made one stretch to Dullunia Tal, 6 miles North East of Chutterpur. He stopped at Dull Tal, a few hours and having got food fell upon the Logasee villages and plundered five of them in one day.¹⁰⁵ This incident took place soon after Gen. Whitlock's forces had been withdrawn from Southern Hamirpur.¹⁰⁶

A series of such raids were undertaken in the parganas of Panwari, Jaitpur and Mahoba. On the 15th of June 1859, one of Despat's lieutenant, Omrao Singh led 2,000 sowars against Kulpahar, a fairly large town little north of Jaitpur and plundered the police outpost, the bazar and several shops.¹⁰⁷ A couple of weeks later on the 29th of June, two villages in pargana Mahoba and two ⁱⁿ pargana Panwari were overrun by Despat's forces. In Mahoba, houses were plundered and from all the four villages men and women were taken away. Almost all the persons kidnapped were

105. From J.P.Stratton To Maj. R.T.Meads, Nowgong, 5th Dec. 1862. For. Pol. A.Jan. 1863, Nos.95-97 (N.A.I.).

106. From J.B.Outram Asstt. Secy to Govt. N.W.P. To W.Mansfield, Chief of the Staff, 9th March 1859 Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.3, Sl.No.64, File No.89, Dept. XII (U.R.R.A.A.).

107. From the Thanadar of Supa, 22nd June 1859. Urdu-Persian Records, Hamirpur, Basta No.5, Sl.No.11, File No.11, Document No.14 (U.P.R.A.A.).

wealthy and mahajans or unfriendly zamindars.¹⁰⁸ Much alarmed, the merchants of Supa, a market town south east of Panwari, decided to escape to Chirkhari. There were earnest request from the tahsildar of Mahoba to the English, for immediate deployment of army or military police to resist the rebel force that threatened the sub-division.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, notices were sent to all zamindars in Jaitpur and Panwari at the beginning of July 1859, to leave their fields uncultivated. They were warned that if they disobeyed this order, they would have to pay dearly for it. In a village Arkul Mau where some cultivation had been begun in disregard of the order, Despat's men came and took away two women and some men in retaliation. The British military and police outposts proved totally ineffective before the rebel actions.¹¹⁰

Strongly entrenched in the thick jungles of southern Hamirpur, Despat and his large following continued their assaults on the State. Fearing an organised move against Jheejhan, Despat and one of his lieutenants, Zalim escaped to Chattarpur while Omrao Khangar, Bhowan Pandit, Nanhey Dewan and Kunjal Shah, all leaders by their own rights

108. From the Magistrate of Hamirpur To Commr. Jhansi Dvn. 6th July 1859. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.7, File No.38, Sl.No.21(23) (U.P.R.A.A.); Weekly Narrative for week ending 2nd July 1859 & From G.H.Feeling, Coll. & Magt. of Hamirpur To F.W.Pinkney, Hamirpur, 6th July 1859. For. Pol. Cons. 19th Aug. 1859. No.35 (N.A.I).

109. Weekly Narrative for week ending 2nd July 1859 & From Feeling To Pinkney, 6th July 1859. For. Pol. Cons. 19th Aug. 1859, No.35 (N.A.I).

110. From Feeling, To Pinkney, Hamirpur, 4th July 1859. For. Pol. Cons. 19th Aug. 1859, No.35 (N.A.I).

retreated into the dense forest in an adjoining hill and some others took shelter in the independent state of Geroli, South West of Hamirpur. Their major area of refuge in the forest/clad hills, provided them a natural sanctuary against apprehension by the English. There was only one point through which the Government force could enter the hills while the rebels knew a thousand ways of retreat. It was almost impossible to get a shot at them because the foliage was so thick that it completely concealed men even within a yard. Besides, the rebels were very cautious and let no one come near them, till they knew him for certain to be a friend. They did not remain a whole day in any one place but shifted grounds two or three times in twenty-four hours, leaving no trace behind them, not even leaf huts. Their constant change of ground defeated every move and attack on them.¹¹¹

British retaliatory measures and increased police actions of combing the hills, progressively pushed Despat more and more south into the States of Panna, Ajaigarh, Chirkhari and Bijawar. Here he joined Mukund Singh, the rebel Thakur of Panna and Farzand Ali of Ajaigarh.¹¹² The three now operated together creating quite a terror for the authorities. In November 1859, Brig. J. Wheler, commanding field operations in Bundelkhand, reported that inspite of

111. From the Magistrate of Hamirpur To the Commr. Jhansi Dvn., Jaitpur, 1st Aug. 1859. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.7, File No.38, Sl.No.23 Dept. XIII. (U.P.R.A.A.).

112. From Col. Sir R. Shakespeare, Agent to the Gov. Gen. for C.India To C.Beadon, Secy. to the Govt. of India in the For. Dept., 10th Oct. 1859. For. Pol. Progs. 25th Nov. 1859, Nos.89-90. (N.A.I.).

great exertions, the British have had no success against the rebels except in breaking up their bands and forcing them to disperse in very small groups.¹¹³ In December, a reward of 10,000 rupees was declared for Despat's capture and 3,000 for Nanhey Dewan.¹¹⁴ But even this proved ineffective. "Despat must have an extraordinary hold on the minds of the people for persons who profess to be ready to hunt up other rebels hang back from even promising about him," observed the baffled British official in March 1860.¹¹⁵ R. Shakespeare, the Agent for Central India felt that, "The arrest of Despat in the estimate should only be second to that of Tantia Topi".¹¹⁶

Despat therefore, became a major challenge for the British. The intrepid rebel eluded Government's organised and resourceful police and military force till 1862. He never remained for more than a few hours at the same place. • Even when in command of large bodies of men, his habitual caution never deserted him. He would lie down in one place preparing to sleep but shortly after the others had fallen off to sleep, he would shift some hundred yards and rest.¹¹⁷

113. From J. Wheler Brig. Commdg. Field Operations Bundelkhand, To Maj. Gen. Sir W.R.Mansfield, Camp near Tigra, Nov.1859. For. Pol. Progs. 30th Dec. 1859, Nos.447-449. (N.A.I).

114. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.3, Sl.No.67, File No.92, Dept.XIII & Box No.3, Sl.No.68, File No.93, Dept.XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

115. From J.P.Stratton, Offg. Pol. Asstt. in Bundelkhand To Richards, Magistrate of Hamirpur, Nowgong, 4th March 1860. Hamirpur Magistracy Records Box No.3, File No.92, Sl.No.67, Dept.XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

116. From J.P.Stratton, To Maj.R.J.Meade, Agent Gov.Gen. for C.India, Nowgong, 5th Dec.1862. Excerpts from a letter by Sir R.Shakespeare, Chirkhari, 2nd Oct.1859. For. Pol.Cons. A.Jan. 1863, Nos.95-97.(N.A.I).

117. Ibid.

Despat died on the 3rd of December 1862 at the hands of British forces while trying to escape from one of his old haunts near Jheelhan.¹¹⁸ After his death, his younger brother Nanhey Dewan took up the vendetta; he was in turn succeeded in 1865 by his nephew Kunjal Shah at whose death in 1866, Raghunath Singh assumed command over a fresh group of rebels thereby keeping the rebellion in the family for more than twenty years.¹¹⁹ The English failed to smother the tradition of resistance that Despat bequeathed to his successors.

In all likelihood, Chattar Singh was separated from Despat towards the close of 1858, when increased British actions broke the union forcing each to return to their own region. Thereafter, while Despat retreated to the jungles of Jheelhan, Chattar Singh went back to Jhansi. Here he commenced rebellion in concert with Bakht Singh of Alipura. Together they led their men to attack, plunder and burn Surajari Kalan, a village in Jhansi. Four Government employees who had come in a group to survey the village, were killed. Chattar Singh's resistance continued undeterred till the 5th of September 1860, the day he was apprehended by the British.

Chattar Singh in his defence made no attempt to refute the evidence for prosecution but alleged that he had been

118. From Central India, 20th Dec. 1862. For. Pol. Progs. A. Jan. 1863, Nos. 95-97. (N.A.I.).

119. From Personal Asstt. to D.G. of Police, N.W.P. To the Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. n.d. for. Pol. Cons. A. July 1868, No. 75 (N.A.I.).

under coercion. The British Court turned down the plea as wholly invalid and declared that Chhattar Singh could not claim benefits under the Amnesty and must suffer the last penalty of the Law. He was convicted of having been one of the leaders of the rebel thakurs and orders were passed to hang him until death.¹²⁰

Such instances of thakur rebellion and undaunted leadership were fairly typical of most of the districts of Bundelkhand. In Jhansi, Bakht Singh of Alipura and Jowahar Singh of Katili sustained resistance for quite sometime after May 1858. The pattern of their actions was similar, designed to strike at authority at its most vulnerable points. They forestalled as long as they could the reassertion of British power in their own regions: when surrounded by British arms, they kept up their protest through sporadic raids and sudden incursions into different villages, though progressively within more and more restricted sphere.¹²¹ Jowahar Singh joined Dowlat Singh in Madhogarh in July 1859, and throughout the year a series of raids on various villages were reported to have been undertaken by them.¹²² Already a year earlier on 3rd August 1858, a reward of

120. From G.Couper, Secy. to the Govt. of N.W.P. To Maj. F.W.Pinkney, Commr. of Jhansi, Kanpur, 9th Jan. 1861. C.O.J. Basta No.8.5(ii), Sl.No.7, File No.88, 1861 (U.P.R.A.A.).

121. State Vs. Jowahar Singh, Urdu-Persian Records, Jhansi, Basta No.5, Sl.No.84. (U.P.R.A.A.).

122. Govt. Vs. Jowahar Singh of Katili - Charge, Rebellion against the British Govt. during 1857, 1858 and 1859. Urdu-Persian Records, Jhansi, Basta No.5. Sl.No.95 (U.P.R.A.A.).

Rs.1,000 was announced for the arrest of Jowahar Singh¹²³ but the British never could lay their hands on him. As for Bakht Singh, he was active within the limits of Alipura as late as in 1868 and his son and brother were heard collecting armed men in villages, Alipura, Jaitpur as well as in some independent States.¹²⁴

A fresh spell of rebellion broke out in Chanderi in October 1858, when Tantya Topi entered the district on his flight from Gwalior in the west. The Thakurs of Jacklone took the lead and others followed. Fenton, the Deputy Commissioner was forced to evacuate Lalitpur and withdraw towards Tehri. On his way to the camp, he was attacked by the rebels and though a charge of cavalry that escorted him successfully beat the rebels back, the alarmed Fenton continued his retreat towards Tehri frontier. Several of the police posts were uprooted and a thanadar taken prisoner by the thakurs.¹²⁵

British return failed to halt the persistent struggle of the thakurs that continued through the whole of 1858 and a good part of 1859. In September 1859, Mahip Singh, a powerful and influential thakur of Pali was captured and a¹²⁶

123. Charges against Jowahar Singh Katiliwala 1st Feb. 1860. Urdu-Persian Records, Jhansi, Basta No.5. Sl.No.95 (U.P.R.A.A.).

124. From the Pol. Asstt. for Bundelkhand To the Magistrate of Hamirpur, 13th March 1868. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.4, Basta No.4. Sl.No.73, File No.101. Dept. XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

125. Narrative of Events for the week ending the 2nd of Oct. 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl. No.77, Vol.82, 1858 (U.P.S.A.L.).

126. From Lt. Thain, Commdg. Chanderi Mil. Police To Maj. W.Davies, Commdg. Jhansi Dvn. Mil. Police, Camp Pali, 14th Sept. 1859. C.O.J. Sl.No.109, File No.169, Dept.XXI. 1858 (U.P.R.A.A.).

large number of others in Chanderi gave themselves up to the British.¹²⁷ The two who still held out were Hamir Singh of Pali and Dabi Singh of Dongra. They demanded as conditions for submission that the Government should grant them free pardon, that Hamir Singh should not be called upon to come before the Deputy Commissioner immediately and that Dabi Singh should have the unexpired term of sentence, for which he was in jail at the time of outbreak, remitted. Prior to this, the Government had repeatedly offered to pardon Hamir Singh but the latter turned them down. On the last occasion, the thakur asserted that he would submit only if apart from the pardon, he was offered several villages in excess of the jagir he held on the eve of the uprising. The Government eventually decided to ask both Hamir Singh and Dabi Singh to come in, only on condition . that their lives and liberty would be spared.¹²⁸

The thakurs returned to rebellion, operating from the Balabehat hills covered with jungles, a little south of Pali, Dongra and Narhat. The hill was so situated, that an extensive view was available from it, of anyone moving in the jungle below. Drawing regular supplies from villages in Dongra, the thakurs remained long shielded from being overtaken by Government police.¹²⁹ Hamir Singh was finally

127. From F.W.Pinkney, Commr. of Jhansi Div. To G.E.W. Couper, Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. Banpur, 8th Sept. 1859. C.O.J. Box No.11, Sl.No.54, File No.27. (U.P.R.A.A.).

128. Ibid.

129. From Lt. A.S.Thain, Dist. Suptd. of Lalitpur Police To Cap. W.G.B. Tyler, Dy. Commr. of Lalitpur, Lalitpur, 29th Aug. 1865. C.O.J. Box No.13, Sl.No.83, File No.109, Dept. XXI. (U.P.R.A.A.).

captured and deported to Moradabad in 1860¹³⁰ and Dabi Singh shifted his venue but continued resistance. Around November 1861 Dabi Singh's men seized a certain Omrao Partab, who had appealed to the Commissioner of Jhansi for a summary settlement of Pali with Mardan Singh. The man was killed. Expressing the helplessness of an organised State power to quell the uprising of the thakurs, the Deputy Commissioner wrote, "Favoured either through friendship or fear, by the whole population of the country; with boundless jungles and fastnesses to roam over; and with safe retreats to run to, in the adjacent native States, hunting them about the country was productive of no good whatever".¹³¹ It was eventually in 1865 that Dabi Singh was captured and killed.¹³²

The annals of these leading thakurs in rebellion, their saga of defiance, of valour and daring, of resolute resistance certainly does not exhaust the catalogue of thakurs and their actions in 1857-58. These outstanding men earned not only notoriety in the eyes of the rulers but they also gathered fame. They drew considerable official attention both in writing and action, even if only as outlaws. But these thakurs who mobilised men in arms, who evolved strategies of defiance, who conceived of an alternate

130. C.O.J. Basta No.8.5(iii), File No.92, Sl.No.14, Dept.XXI 1862. (U.P.R.A.A.).

131. From Capt. T.A.Corbett, Dy. Commr. of Lalitpur To Maj. F.W.Pinkney, Commr. Jhansi, Camp Lalitpur, 24th Feb. 1862. C.O.J. Sl.No.79, File No.115. Dept.XXI. (U.P.R.A.A.).

132. C.O.J. Sl.No.79, File No.115 Dept.XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

political order were more exceptions than rule. While there was one Despat, there were hundreds of thakurs who followed him. Such hundreds, scattered all over Bundelkhand were up in rebellion against authority, possibly as followers or as individual rebels operating within their immediate and more constricted geographical and political sphere, or as men who lent their unstinted support and assistance to their more active colleagues. They formed the essential base, created the needed environment, conducive to sustaining the drawn out insurgency of the thakurs. These thakurs emerge infrequently in stray references, intercepting at intervals in the official narrative of the so-called rebel leaders. Therefore, all we know of Agub Singh, Bhup Singh, Amrit Singh and Rup Singh, Thakurs of Bahadurpur in Kuchwahagar, is that they were charged with rebellion against Government from February 1859 to 1861,¹³³ about Mallol Singh, a pattidar of mauza Hirapur in the Jalaun pargana, possessing half the estate, that he had joined other rebels in plundering several villages including Hirapur and Jagnao and till the advance of British troops on the district had been collecting revenue from his village and the neighbouring region.¹³⁴ There were so many more of whom we know little or nothing. The Raja of Budhek, an estate comprising of 26 villages in Jalaun, throughout the

133. From J.D.Sandford To F.W.Pinkney, Pura, 5th Jan. 1861. C.O.J. Basta No.8, Sl.No.15, File No.79 (U.P.R.A.A.).

134. From Capt. J.N.H. Maclean, Dy. Commr. of Jalaun To F.W.Pinkney, Orai, 5th June 1860. C.O.J. Basta No.10, Sl.No.37, File No.52 (U.P.R.A.A.).

uprising stood by the rebels, provided them with shelter and provisions. He fired upon the Magistrate of Etawah when the officer passed near his fort and possibly took to occasional plundering but never on a scale to cause great concern to the British. In 1858, the Government thought it expedient to remove the family from Budhek because "... it had much influence over the plundering tribes of Rajputs ..." ¹³⁵ Occasional references were made of the Thakurs of Sonowri in Chanderi and the Jagirdars of Gurwai in Jhansi. The former, led ~~by~~ a certain Omrao Singh who styled himself the Rana, attacked Talbehat in September 1858 and forced the local police to retreat to a garhi at Bansi, which the thakurs then besieged till they ran out of ammunition. ¹³⁶ The Sonowri Rajputs once again attacked Talbehat on the night of 23rd December 1858 ¹³⁷ and a regiment of Government troops in January, the following year. ¹³⁸ In retaliation, the British decided to destroy the part of Sonowri that these thakurs occupied. ¹³⁹ It was

135. From A.H.Ternan, Dy. Commr. of Jalaun To F.W. Pinkney, Kunch, 3rd Dec. 1858. C.O.J. Box No.7, Sl.No.8, File No.25, Dept.XXII 1859 (U.P.R.A.A.).

136. Enclosure to letter in English. Name of the writer not decipherable. Urdu-Persian Records, Jhansi, Basta No.5, Sl.No.92 (U.P.R.A.A.).

137. From F.A.Fenton, Dy. Commr. of Chanderi To F.W. Pinkney, Camp. Prampura, 25th Dec. 1858. C.O.J. Basta No.112, Sl.No.63, File No.15 (U.P.R.A.A.).

138. Enclosure to letter in English. Urdu-Persian Records, Jhansi, Basta No.5, Sl.No.92 (U.P.R.A.A.).

139. From F.A.Fenton To F.W.Pinkney, 25th Dec. 1858. C.O.J. Basta No.12, File No.15, Sl.No.63 (U.P.R.A.A.).

sometime after the British return to Bundelkhand, that the Jagirdars of Gurwa, two brothers Dhakunju and Ganeshju, took to rebellion. They led expeditions especially in the Gwalior region and to a lesser extent in Jhansi. But they continuously afforded asylum and assistance to rebel leaders like Jowahar Singh and Naranyan Singh. Unlike any other thakur, the Gurwai Jagirdars after coming in under the Amnesty, again broke out into rebellion.¹⁴⁰ Finally in July 1859, British forces marched on Gurwai, defeated and killed Dhakunju and Ganeshju and confiscated their jagir.¹⁴¹

5.4 The character of struggle.

These separate instances of protest staged by the thakurs tie up to form a pattern of actions that was certainly unique in the context of the movement of 1857-58. The uprising of the thakurs was truly a part, a splinter, that built up to the general insurrection and yet it was a splinter apart that moved on its own orbit. It was universal and specific at the same time. It's universality lay in its shared antagonism to authority and its ultimate purpose to negate, to withhold, to defeat the British Government in 1857-58. It was unique in that it operated within its own time - frame, at its own bidding, it was unique in its own form of protest, in its political linkages and alliances and

140. From Capt. E.Clerk, Dy. Commr. of Jhansi To F.W. Pinkney, Jhansi, 13th June 1859, C.O.J. Box No.7, Sl.No.12, File No.19, Dept.XXII. (U.P.R.A.A.).

141. From Capt. E.Clerk To F.W.Pinkney, Camp. Jhansi. 12th July 1859 & letter dated 13th July 1859 - ref. not decipherable. C.O.J. Sl.No.51. File No.30, Dept.XXI. (U.P.R.A.A.).

in its persistence. Wherein the structure of analysis can one fit the actions of these indomitable thakurs of Bundelkhand? The British themselves had no clue. The Officiating Deputy Secretary to the Government, observing the events in Bundelkhand from Allahabad in November 1858, thought that Burjore Singh and Despat were men "... rather to be regarded as banditti than as political rebels".¹⁴² The British closer to the ground knew better than this. R. Shakespeare, the Agent to the Governor-General for Central India remarked in 1860, "Robin Hood was not more celebrated in our Forests than Despat is in the Jungles of Bundelcund."¹⁴³ Five years late, Shakespeare's successor R.J.Meade warned his Government while talking of Nanhey Dewan and Kunjal Shah in Hamirpur that "it would be a mistake to regard them as Dacoits whose principal aim was plunder."¹⁴⁴ It is indeed very difficult ^{to} place the thakurs in any single category or define their actions by means of a given standard measure. Their rebellion was complex and embodied multiple features that need to be spliet out.

The resistance of the thakurs to authority cannot be encompassed within the contours of the movement of 1857-58

142. Narrative of Events for the week ending 22nd Nov. 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82, 1858. (U.P.S.A.L.).

143. From R. Shakespeare To C. Beadon, 16th Feb. 1860. For. Pol. Cons. 30th Dec. 1859, Nos.447-449 (N.A.I.).

144. From Lt. Col. R.J.Meade, Agent Govt. Gen. for C.India To R.Simson, Secy. to the Govt. of the N.W.P., Indore Residency, 9th June 1865. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.6, Sl.Nos.4-6, Dept. XVII 1865 (U.P.R.A.A.).

that had a definite beginning and a fairly tangible end. The protest of the thakurs corresponded to neither of the two points. The mutiny, the widespread rebellion and the overthrow of the British did not instigate the thakurs to defy authority but prepared the conducive situation for their defiance to become more articulate, effective and persistent. 1857-58 did not turn the thakurs into rebels, the way sepoys had become mutineers. The Rajput thakurs had always been rebels, defiant and recalcitrant as far as any centralised Government was concerned - Mughals, Marathas or British. The movement of 1857-58 merely exacerbated their defiance, brought many more thakurs into the fray, but neither began nor terminated it. Even in the fifty years of British rule, the thakurs had periodically stood up against Government encroachment and political imposition as in the 1810s, 20s and 40s; ¹⁴⁵ their response to the uprising of 1857-58 was a logical sequel to their erstwhile actions and a crucial phase that intervened in the thakurs' ceaseless resistance that continued for long into the 1870s. Even individually the interaction of the thakurs with the Government machinery had not been without tension as the experiences of the thakur leaders show.

A Bundela, who could trace his descent from Chattrasal's son Jagat Raj, Despat came from the family of lambardars of Jheelhan, the southern most village in pargana Panwari of the Hamirpur district. The village stood on the borders

145. cf. Chapter II.

of this district and the Chattarpur State. The first British settlement was made in 1838 with Narpat Singh as the lambardar of Jheelhan. On Narpat Singh's death, Jowahar Singh, Despat's eldest brother, succeeded as the lambardar. Jowahar Singh, however, lost much of his lands to Mohan Chowbey, the son of a zamindar in Jheelhan who had worked the land since the time of Arjan Singh, the father of Narpat Singh. Mohan Chowbey asked Jowahar Singh to write the lamberdari in his name. Unable to meet the British revenue demands, Jowahar Singh agreed to the arrangement. Sometime after, Mohan Chowbey decided to assert his right over what was now legitimately his. He told the Bundela family that they were intruders and had no right on the house they lived in or the food they ate, that they had so long been on sufferance and now the sooner they left the better. He denied them the customary manorial rights over water, fruits and jungles, respectively the 'jalkar', 'phalkar' and 'bankar'. The thakurs driven to the wall by such persecution resorted to arms, in defence of their honour; they went into Bhumia-wat. Despat took the revenge on behalf of his family. In about 1847 or 1848, he killed Mohan Chowbey and at successive intervals put to death Nanhey Chowbey, a pattidar and Sardar Chowbey both closely related to the zamindar and Iswari the patwari of Jheelhan.¹⁴⁶ Despat refused to let anyone take

146. From Capt. T. Dunnehy, Dist. Suptd. of Hamirpur
To the Magistrate of Hamirpur, n.d. For. Pol.
Cons. A. July 1868. No.75 (N.A.I.).

lease of the village and killed those who dared to do so.¹⁴⁷ He had already turned a wanted outlaw who successfully evaded apprehension, till the outbreak of 1857-58 appropriated his resistance and found him heading a large band of dissenters.

The Jagirdar of Alipura, Rao Hindupat had staunchly remained in favour of Government in 1857-58, while his cousins Bakht Singh and Golab Singh co-sharers in the same jagir had been noted rebels.¹⁴⁸ A long standing difference existed between Hindupat and Bakht Singh over the division of the jagir. The Government intervened and decided in 1846, that the former was to retain the whole of Alipura undivided. Bakht Singh rose to resist the resolution and resorted to what the official report described as "... several acts of disobedience and contumacy ..." causing "... systematic obstruction of the settlement intended".¹⁴⁹ Finally over two conferences in 1849-50, G.A. Bushby, the British Agent in Bundelkhand, arrived at an arrangement whereby Bakht Singh was to enjoy half of one share in Alipura instead of the whole.¹⁵⁰ The disaffected thakur became a rebel against authority in 1857.

147. From J.P.Stratton To R.J.Meade, Nowgong, 5th Dec. 1862. Excerpts from a letter by Sir R. Shakespeare Charkhari, 2nd Oct. 1859. For. Pol. A. Jan. 1863. Nos.95-97 (N.A.I.).

148. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.7, Sl.No.19, File No.23, Dept.XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

149. From G.A.Bushby, Agent to the Gov.Gen. in Bundelkhand To Sir H.M.Elliot, Secy. to the Govt. of India with the Gov.Gen. Jhansi, 19th April 1850. For. Pol. Progs. 31st May 1850. No.186 (N.A.I.).

150. Ibid.

The jagir of Pali was in the possession of two brothers, Hamir Singh and Mardan Sing. Around 1853, a dispute between the brothers was resolved at a panchayat and each was given two villages. When rebellion broke out in 1857, Hamir Singh expelled Mardan Singh from his villages and appropriated the entire management of the jagir.¹⁵¹ Dabi Singh was related to the Thakurs of Dongra, an influential brotherhood in southern Lalitpur.¹⁵² He was in prison at the outbreak of rebellion, for cattle stealing and he broke out in 1857 when some nine or ten months of his imprisonment were still unexpired.¹⁵³ Together Hamir Singh and Dabi Singh kept up insurrection in Chanderi throughout 1859 and 1860. A Puar by caste, Burjore Singh was the lambardar of Belawan, an old regulation village in pargana Kunch (5 miles from Betwa and 7 miles from Kunch) paying to Government a revenue of Rupees 3,972 annually.¹⁵⁴ He also possessed in another village Bahdari, 4 pie 15 krant in partnership, his share paying 252 rupees to the Government

151. From F.A.Fenton, Dy. Commr. of Chanderi To F.W. Pinkney, Camp. Pali, 28th Jan. 1859. C.O.J. Box No.7, Sl.No.2, File No.32, Dept.XXII 1860 (U.P.R.A.A.).

152. From A.S.Thain, Dist. Suptd. of Lalitpur Police To Capt. W.G.B. Tyler, Dy. Commr. of Lalitpur, Lalitpur, 29th Aug. 1865. C.O.J. Box No.13, Sl.No.83, File No.109. Dept. XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

153. From F.W.Pinkney To G.F.W.Couper, Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. Banpur, 8th Sept. 1859. C.O.J. Box No.11, Sl.No.54, File No.27. (U.P.R.A.A.).

154. From R. Shakespeare To C.Beadon, May 1869. C.O.J. Box No.13, Sl.No.81, File No.112. (U.P.R.A.A.).

every year.¹⁵⁵ Burjore Singh was, as the Deputy Commissioner of Jalaun put it, an habitual defaulter who had on some occasions been in jail for not been able to pay up the revenue demand.¹⁵⁶

Such anecdotal account is not to determine the causality in the uprising of the thakurs nor to argue that their actions in 1857-58 simply disguised an extension of their former 'outlawry', that in the wake of the widespread insurrection, it was a natural step from one to the other. Such instances show that these thakurs were already dissenters who stood on the margins of the domain of law, Government and authority. Their response to the movement of 1857-58 was therefore largely determined by their past traditions of resistance what, in the eyes of authority, was perpetual insubordination. Thus in 1833-34, a number of garhiband thakurs in Jhansi and Jalaun, resenting the regional Chiefs' measures to reduce them, took to arms. Again in 1839, when British took control of Jhansi, the thakurs of Udgaon, Jigna, Noner and Bilhari withheld revenue payments and levied their own tax, the 'taki' on the people in direct defiance to the regulations of the Government.¹⁵⁷ It was the same thakurs who carried their protest into the movement of 1857-58. When Scindia handed over Kuchwahagar

155. From A.H.Ternan To F.W.Pinkney, Kalpi, 23rd July 1858. C.O.J. Box No.7, Sl.No.18, File No.13, Dept. XXII 1859. (U.P.R.A.A.).

156. From J.N.H.Maclean, Chanderi, 12th June 1858. For. Pol.Cons. 6th Aug. 1858. Nos.189-190 (N.A.I); From F.W.Pinkney, Commr. of Jhansi To W.Muir, Jhansi, 27th June 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 27th Aug. 1858. No.134 (N.A.I.).

157. cf. Chapter II.

districts to the British in 1844, the thakurs had been in rebellion against the Mahrattas. The British too were diffident about the Kuchwaha gharibands because of their habitual defiance, their close clannish feeling and their natural inclination towards combining against a common cause. The Kuchwahas lived up to their image in 1857-58. The rebellion of the thakurs carried within it these residues of their traditional political behaviour and reflected their normative patterns of linkages, alliances and forms of actions.

The thakurs in rebellion though regarded as outlaws by the State were very much a part of their immediate rural world and were accepted and acknowledged as such. As landed proprietors of whatever rank, they had a certain economic and in the case of some mafidars and gharibands, certain political status in their agrarian society and commanded the loyalty of other residents. On the other hand, as Rajputs, whether Bundela, Puar or Kuchwaha, they upheld a defined social image and more important, had crucial caste linkages. Subscribing either to groups agnatically related or being members of endogamous clans, the thakurs belonged to a wide but defined kinship network which extended beyond their own estate but was placed within a definite geographical confine. In moments of crisis, these relationships and connections were translated into political linkages, alliances and loyalties that formed the basis of thakur rebellion in 1857-58.

At the operational level, the decisive linkage for the thakurs was that of caste which defined and located their actions. Thus, each thakur had a given, cognizable sphere of operations. Burjore Singh could trace descent from a common ancestor with thakurs holding villages in parganas Kunch and Orai in the district of Jalaun. His family married into the Dhundera and Bundela clans and its marital connections spread over several villages in Jhansi and some in the independent States falling within the Bundelkhand Agency.¹⁵⁸ Despat and his band of Bundela followers had an even wider network of connections, with relations by blood and marriage spread all over southern Bundelkhand, east of Betwa. Beyond that river, they had no influence and little security, thereby naturally restricting their area of actions.¹⁵⁹ Two of Despat's immediate associates were Nanhey Dewan, his younger brother who had formerly been in service at Indore and Kunjal Shah, their nephew. The latter was the son of one of their sisters married to Kumir Singh, a thakur of Urja in Chattarpur.¹⁶⁰ Both Nanhey Dewan and Kunjal Shah headed separate groups of rebels and operated on their own though under the ostensible command of Despat. Across the borders, the Rani of Chattarpur herself was Despat's second cousin.¹⁶¹

158. From R.Shakespeare To C.Beadon, May 1869. C.O.J. Box No.13, Sl.No.81, File No.112 (U.P.R.A.A.).

159. From R.Shakespeare To C.Beadon, 10th Oct. 1859. For. Pol.Progs. 25th Nov. 1859. No.89 (N.A.I.).

160. From T.Dunnehy, Dist. Suptd. of Hamirpur To The Magt. of Hamirpur, n.d. For. Pol. Cons. A. July 1868, No.75 (N.A.I.).

161. From C.J.H.Richards, Offg. Dy. Commr. of Hamirpur To F.W.Pinkney, Jaitpur, 6th Feb.1860, C.O.J. Box No.14, Sl.No.91, File No.98. (U.P.R.A.A.).

Jowahar Singh himself belonged to the village Katili in Datia State but held hereditary lands in Jhansi and was married into the family of Dewan Khet Singh of Buroni also in Jhansi.¹⁶² This explained Jowahar Singh's operations in the Jhansi district in 1857-58. Dabi Singh was a member of a powerful brotherhood of the thakurs of Dongra in southern Lalitpur.

The importance of these different sets of linkages and the areas within which they were situated, were crucial factors for the thakurs both at the beginning and towards the end of their rebellion. They provided the essential springboard from where the thakurs actually took off in 1857-58; and it was precisely here that they returned during crisis, when towards the end of 1858 and in 1859, their rebellion found itself in the last leg of defence against the on-rushing forces of authority. This of course, relates to those thakurs who broadened their actions to envelop regions beyond the restricted zone as most did not even venture out. But even when they did, they invariably came back to where they began from. Thus Burjore Singh, Despat, Bakht Singh, Chattar Singh retreated to their respective areas once the high tide of their rebellion began to recede.

Within their immediate locale, the second crucial connection of the thakurs was with the people, who provided them

162. From Capt. E.Clerk, Dy. Commr. 1st Class Jhansi To F.W.Pinkey, 29th March 1859. C.O.J. Box No.11, Sl.No.57, File No.23, Dept. XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

shelter and provisions. The unstinted support of the people to these thakurs partially out of deference for their social status, partially from fear and partially from genuine sympathy towards their cause, decisively withheld British apprehension of the rebel Rajputs. As late as in 1865, a British official observed, "The facility with which they are able to carry out their schemes will be found to depend chiefly on the aid they receive from their friends or agents on the spot or in the neighbourhood ..." ¹⁶³ More of this would be said in the following chapter but such support go to show that the thakurs even in rebellion were accepted and acknowledged, if not honoured and respected members of society. They were never ostracized or pushed to the margin of their society. On the other hand, their battle with the Government and all those directly and indirectly associated with it, symbolised fight for the defence of their country, their honour and their rightful claims. For the people, the resistance of the thakur insured them against the revenue exactions of the British Government and the unpredictable vagaries of economic crisis. Such evaluation lent itself to give the actions of the thakurs, a moral legitimisation in the eyes of society. The approval turned Despat's immunity from capture into a widespread belief that he had the power of becoming invisible. ¹⁶⁴ The belief disguised the hope of

163. From Lt.Col. R.J.Meade, Agent Gov.Gen. for C.India To R.Simon, Secy. to the Govt. of the N.W.P. Indore Residency, 9th June 1865. C.O.J. Box No.6, Sl.Nos. 4-6, File No.94. Dept.XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

164. From J.P.Stratton To R.J.Meade, 5th Dec. 1862. Excerpts from a letter by Sir R.Shakespeare, Charkhari, 2nd Oct. 1859. For. Pol.Cons. A. Jan. 1863, Nos.95-97 (N.A.I.).

the people that rebellion against authority be invulnerable.¹⁶⁵ Caste-linkages, pre-existing social and political status apart, the thakurs mobilised support, commanded allegiance through their actions in 1857. Their leadership in rebellion was not natural, residues of the past but an outcome of their initiative in rebellion. Despat, Burjore Singh, Chattar Singh or Dowlat Singh drew upon themselves the mantle of power, it was neither thrust upon them nor was it assured. True, as Rajputs, they had a social edge over others. But in 1857, they multiplied their superior rights manifold and acquired political status and definite powers to rule. They created their own kingdoms, set up their own order and consolidated their own support. Nothing of these were given, Despat was the younger brother of a lambardar, Bhakht Singh was the rebel brother and Dabi Sing, a relative of the Thakurs of Dongra, who had been caught stealing. Therefore, none were leaders with assured prescriptions of authority or acknowledged Chiefs of their immediate dominions. It was their actions, initiative, their dynamic roles in resistance that turned them into leaders. But given their individual initiative and enterprise, the thakurs were able to translate their acquired power even in rebellion only within a defined territorial limit. The factors drawing the lines of spatial demarcation were determined by the caste-linkages and preexisting ties that each commanded over specific regions.

165. E. J. Hobsbawm, Bandits (London, 1960) p. 51.

In more tangible terms, therefore, the rebellion of the thakurs related to their immediate local situations. They operated within their local, identifiable regions and if they moved beyond, it was more an exception than a rule. Even the springs of the thakurs' actions, their complaints, grievances, anxieties as well as hopes and aspirations, concerned the world within their reach. This factor made for their protest being splintered, scattered, diffused. But on no occasion did these dispersed struggles fall short of being a political movement with a definite purpose and a defined direction. A determined resistance to British authority joined the splinters to form a movement of varied patterns that evolved through a number of phases. The actions of the thakurs throughout the period of their resistance from 1857 were never mere bhumiawats caught in a broader political canvass, nor were they ever insensible indulgences in crime and outlawry. The rebellion of the thakurs was decidedly directed against British authority and right from its inception. True, it began in a situation where authority had already been replaced. The thakurs used the moment to reoccupy the garhis they had been displaced from and to carve out their own niches of political strength, quite independent of the other forces of rebellion. It was their determined opposition to the British attempts at reoccupying Bundelkhand that patched up a union between the thakurs, Tantya Topi, Laxmi Bai and the soldiers. It was a working union that emerged from the very logic of protest at all levels. The thakurs led their

men as far as Kalpi but not beyond. Once the organised rebellion of the soldiers and the potentates was defeated, the thakurs came back to their own regions to continue their resistance to authority.

From May 1858, began the most fascinating phase in the rebellion of the thakurs and a phase that reflected the true political content of their struggle. The thakurs now rose to expel the local Government officials recently reinstated, from as many parganas as possible. Smaller towns insufficiently protected, were attacked and captured by the thakurs. But from these offensive acts at negating authority grew constructive attempts at building alternate structures of rule. Thus Burjore Singh and Despat formally proclaimed their individual rules duplicating the traditional political form and convention. Nearly all thakurs recruited men, raised revenue and carved out their own individual spheres of undisputed authority. Apart from posing such direct challenge to Government, the thakurs resorted to various acts of crime that indirectly opposed the British State. Here they displayed a remarkable sense of discrimination. They never indulged in wanton killing and thoughtless crime. Observing Burjore Singh in action in western Jalaun the British found that the rebels "... plunder and oppressat will those individuals who are faithful to us, or who are rich ..." ¹⁶⁶ Despat plundered villages

166. From F.W.Pinkney To W.Muir, Jhansi, 5th Aug. 1858. Mil. Progs. 3rd Sept. 1858, No.454. (N.A.I).

in Logassi because the Chief was for the British, and all those regions that returned to British rule had to suffer retributions in the hands of the thakurs. Their reprisals were equally directed towards mahajans, the perennial allies of Government and the rich zamindars who opposed rebellion. Attacks on them served two purposes. Apart from the ransoms that kidnapping or attacking them generated, such acts postponed indefinitely, the reestablishment of British authority in these localised pockets. Collaborators were relentlessly punished and anyone who gave away information about the rebels were instantly put to death.¹⁶⁷ A fairly widespread form of resistance among the thakurs was to deliberately prevent people from cultivating land. This was a common mode of protest resorted to by the Rajputs when they went on Bhumiawat. In 1857, a traditional feature of rebellion was appropriated for a different purpose and in a different context. Stopping normal agricultural pursuits was not intended to disrupt temporarily the political system for immediate gains. It was one of the many means to forestall the restoration of a fallen State, a beaten political order. It was in this phase too, that individual thakurs forged working alliances with their counterparts. Such union grew out^{of} their protest, cutting across caste ties and their village linkages, the conjunction, brought about by their common adversary and similar political ends. Thus Despat and Chattar Singh worked together as did Burjore Singh and Dowlat

167. From J.P.Stratton To R.J.Meade, Nowgong, 5th Dec. 1862. For. Pol. Cons. A.Jan. 1863, Nos.95-97. (N.A.I).

Singh in Jhansi and Dabi Singh and Hamir Singh in Chanderi.

British counter-insurgency measures split them again forcing them to retreat to their safest refuge, their own village or adjoining native States or into difficult hills, jungles and ravine land. It was at this stage, that they became outlaws, literally. In smaller bands they shifted grounds constantly much in the fashion of wanted bandits. It was now too that their actions showed a marked change. From trying to build an alternative order they turned towards leading sporadic raids, sudden incursions and intermittent attacks. Kidnapping became more frequent as plunder and loot dominated their actions. Rebels sent notes to villagers not to cultivate lands and actually resorted to terrorising men from any active cooperation with the Government. This was their last die-hard attempt to impede the restoration of British order at any cost. The onrushing forces of authority therefore ultimately scattered them, disoriented, dislocated them and denied them any ordered actions.

The thakurs in rebellion were neither social bandits nor aggrieved Rajputs rising up in transient bhumiawats. They were political rebels with positive political ambitions, direction and vision. Those who continued to resist, refused to accept the Queens Proclamation and did not try to take advantage of the declaration of Amnesty when it was circulated in Bundelkhand in July 1858.¹⁶⁸ Unlike the Rajas, the

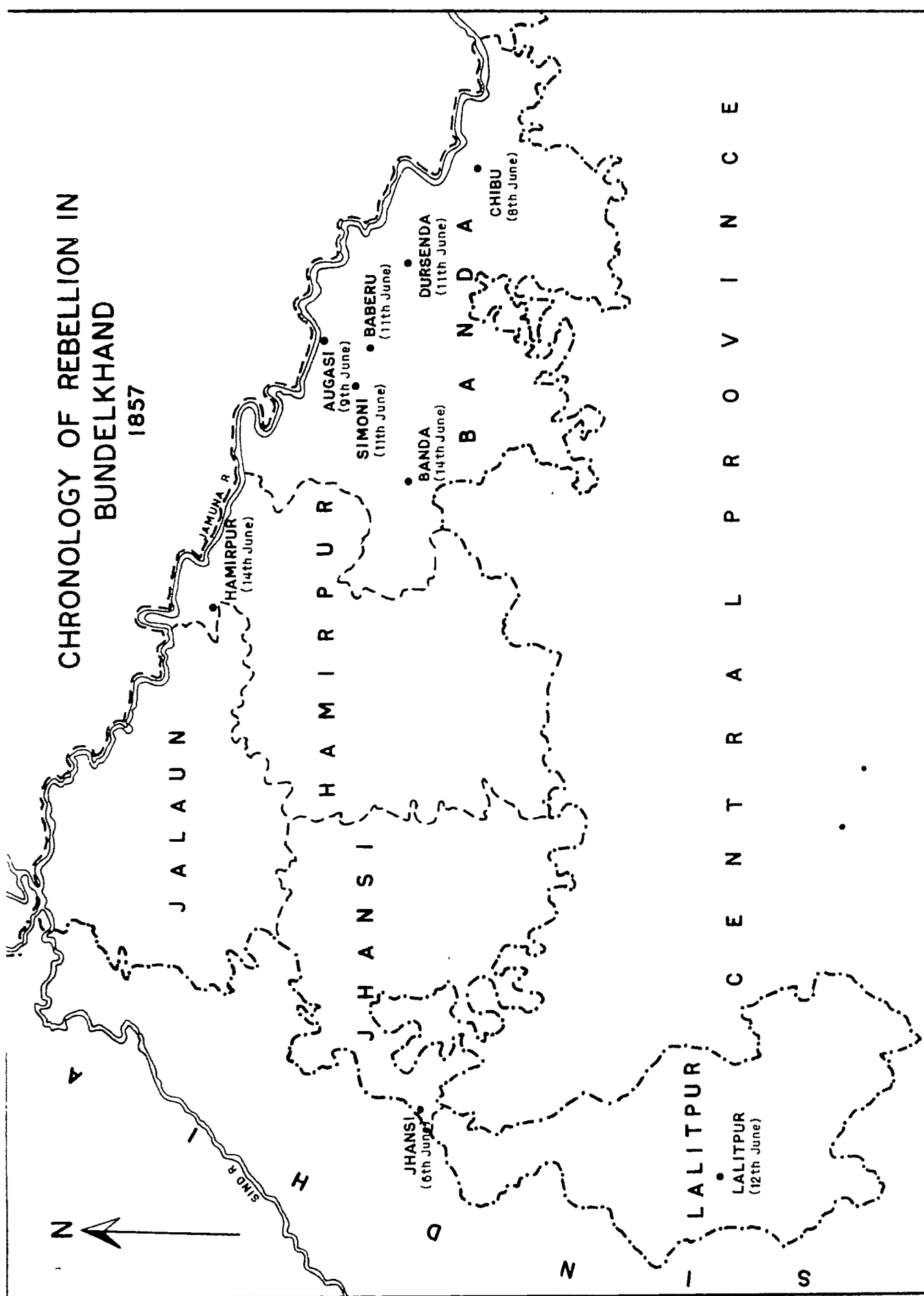
168. Abstract of a Trans. of Rubakari of the 4th July 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 24th Sept. 1858, No.23 (N.A.I.).

thakurs never compromised. On the 13th of December 1858, the police sent with a copy of the proclamation to Gurwai, were seized. They were shortly allowed to leave uninjured with the warning that if they or any other Government servant was again seen in Gurwai, they would be killed.¹⁶⁹

Receiving the proclamation, Despat put the paper into his pipe and smoked it. In the process, he was said to have set fire to his own beard.¹⁷⁰ It was in their persistent defiance that the thakurs stood apart from the others in rebellion in 1857-58. Their protracted action and the British determination to crush them, provoked a war of attrition. In this, while authority backed by its superior resources survived, the thakurs gradually lost out. Their rebellion was turned into banditti, outlawry while their natural habitat was lost in the wild ravines, hills and jungles leaving a lasting impression of them and their spirit of resistance that refused to die.

169. From Capt. E.Clerk, Dy. Commr. of Jhansi
To Maj. F.W.Pinkney, Jhansi, 13th June 1859.
C.O.J. Box No.7, Sl.No.12, File No.19,
Dept. XXII 1859. (U.P.R.A.A.).

170. Mrs. H. Duberly, Campaioning Experiences in Rajpootana and Central India during the suppression of the Mutiny 1857-1858 (London, 1859), pp. 238-239.



CHRONOLOGY OF REBELLION IN BUNDELKHAND 1857

C E N T R A L P R O V I N C E

The Rebellion of the People.

This chapter is an attempt to pull out and string together the story of resistance that the ordinary people mustered against British rule in 1857. The authors of this story were those countless mass of men without names and identities, those faceless non-entities of history, who were denied the importance of the Rajas, the influence of the thakurs or the organisation of the sepoys. These were the subordinate classes of men whose individual identities were dissolved in categories that lumped them together as 'villagers', 'city badmashes', 'followers' or just 'people'.

The task of reconstructing the actions and perception of men of the lower order in 1857 is not an easy one. Analogous to their status in the established political and economic hierarchy, the protest of these men were subordinated to those of the dominant groups. A lot is recorded about the resistance of Despat and Burjore Singh, of the behaviour of Ali Bahadur and Mardan Singh but the peasants of Murka or the town people of Hamirpur are lost in the melee'. Yet in 1857, the uprising of the common people was a force that all had to reckon with. Instances of their initiative were too outstanding to be ignored even by the colonial officials. Resistance of the villagers thus made its way in the reports and narratives. But, since the concern of the narrator was to capture the entire gamut of the movement from above, the actions of the subordinate people feature in fragments in his account. It was only when these men through their struggle came to interact directly with the structure

of authority, that their actions were reported. The attempts of these people to challenge authority directly, however, were continually intercepted by the intervention of politics of the dominant groups. The State came in direct touch with the people only when their insurrection preceded or was able to counteract the overbearing force of the rebellion of those who stood at levels above them. Therefore, the resistance of the subordinate groups appear fragmented and episodic.

The actions of these insignificant men were still recorded, even though broken and in piecemeals. Their identities, however, were seldom delineated. They were branded and marked out in groups, either in terms of the place of their habitation - villages or towns they belonged to or their separate castes. The need to herd them together in lumps arose from the demands of counter-insurgency. Villages and caste - groups that were marked out had to bear the grudge of the State's retaliatory measures. In very bold lines, people at this level subscribed to the humblest category - peasants and petty zamindars of the village and the labouring class and the poor in the towns. It is their protest that enabled the movement of 1857 to spread horizontally and encompass a large space.

6.1 Forms of popular resistance.

Popular response to the insurrectionary situation in 1857 was multifarious and varied. The very nature of their political organisation that was limited by the boundaries of

their immediate, inhabited locality made for a fractured movement. For every peasant and each townsman, his respective village or town was the context in which he operated. It was from experiences within that defined space that the people chose their allies and marked out their enemies in a diverse network of relationships. Thus, a locale provided positive elements of mobilisation, the alliances and linkages on the strength of which the people stood up to negate the adverse forces. The very recognition of these forces of opposition was again related to their immediate experiences within a distinct territorial limit. This caused the insurgency at this level to be scattered and multifid and at the same time heterogenous in nature. People used multiple forms of protest, diverse motifs of political articulation to resist the British authority. At the same time, every expression of protest disguised a conscious assessment by the people of their own mobilised strength vis-a-vis the weakness of the authority.

Of the varied responses of the people in 1857, the primary were actions directed at negating British authority. In Bundelkhand such an outbreak was first reported in the district of Banda. F.O.Mayne, the Magistrate and Collector narrated the course of events later, in September 1857.

"The insurrection commenced in the Banda District in the villages of Murka, in Pergunnah Buberoo, in Mow on the Jumna and in the Dursenda Pergunah. I first heard of the assembling of armed men, of secret councils, and loudly uttering threats from the Pergunahs. This was in the beginning of June, and they were soon followed up by the mutineers at Cawnpore and Allahabad, before which no actual

outbreak or even a dacoitee had taken place in the Banda District. The released convicts from Allahabad and Cawnpore, however, soon spread over the country and forced the Ghats on the Jumna, notwithstanding previous precautions, which had been more for the purpose of apprehending fugitives than to resist armed masses, and the insurrection of the whole country followed too soon upon the disasters of Allahabad to allow of any strengthening the Ghats ... The released convicts found the Banda people only too ready to join them." 1

The beginning of the uprising was conditioned by two sets of positive knowledge, the first of the adversary and the second that measured the vulnerability of the adversary. The physical presence of mutineers from Allahabad that spoke of the overthrow of British rule in the neighbouring district, provided the occasion for the people of Banda to do the same. Tahsils along the Jamuna in the north, rose in rebellion one after the other almost in a kind of geographical sequence early in June 1857, sometime before the mutiny in the town forced the district officials to leave station. Mayne observed (after Mow) "The loss of the Kumasin, Buberoo, Simounnee and Pylanee Tehseeless soon followed in a like manner. I saw Tehseelee after Tehseelee going and the waves of the rebellion rapidly approaching Banda itself, and was totally helpless to prevent it. The whole District went to the bad in less than a week." 2 The rest of the district in the west and the south west, awaited the

1. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the District of Banda. 1857-58. Part I. From F.O. Mayne, Magistrate and Collector of Banda. To C. Chester, Commissioner, Allahabad Division, 11th September, 1857, para 10, p. 316.

2. Ibid.

departure of the English officials before rising up in rebellion. W.W.Osborne, on duty with the Maharaja of Rewah reported on the 22nd of June, "The district of Banda is in hands of the rebels, after the local authorities had fled and a large body of mutineers had arrived at Banda." ³ The beginning of insurrection in Banda was a product of the initiative of the countless unidentified people of the villages who responded to the insurrectionary situation by positive attempts at invalidating the strength of authority.

In 1857, the people chose to combat those symbols of power with which they interacted directly and immediately. For the villagers of Banda, British power rested in the tahsilis and thannas and therefore both these institutions came under fire. An even pattern emerged from the instances of rebellion in all the villages of Banda and elsewhere. Thanas and tahsilis were attacked and plundered, records destroyed and the government officials driven out. The escaped prisoners from Allahabad entered the pargana of Chiboo on the 8th of June. It was here that the government establishments first gave way.⁴ The following day in Pargana Augasi, the residents of villages Murka and Sungurra rose in rebellion. When the Tahsildar went to ^{coerce} them, they attacked him and turned him out. On returning to Buberu on the 11th, the Tahsildar found the headquarters surrounded by people

3. From W.W.Osborne, on special duty with the Maharaja of Rewah 22nd June 1857, For.Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857, No.188. (N.A.I).

4. N.E., Banda, Appendix-A, pp. 337-340.

from Murka, Sungurra and Buberu. They plundered the tahsili and treasury containing 5,000 rupees, destroyed all the records and dismantled the building and killed the Karinda. The Tahsildar and police fled to Banda.⁵ Pargana Simouni immediately adjoining Augasi on the west, "... was undisturbed" till the 10th of June. The people of villages Johurpur and Bainda in that pargana then ^{began}plundering to be followed by their counterparts in Simree Wasilpur. The latter had initially offered to assist the Tahsildar at the Headquarters. " No sooner, however, had they arrived at Tindwaree, the Headquarters of the Tahsil, than they sent messengers to the Johurpur people, telling them to come and aid in plundering the Tahsilee and village of Tindwara. Some three or four thousand men of Johurpur, Bainda, Simree and Wasilpur, on the 11th June, assembled at Tindwaree." ⁶ The tahsili was destroyed, treasury sacked, records burnt and the officials forced to flee. An interesting instance of rebellion was narrated about pargana Dursenda.

"The Tehsildar of this pargana, Shaikh Khadim Hossein, a resident of Oude, had long been attached to this pargana, to this pargana, and he had been excessively kind to the people, especially to the men of Kamasin (the Headquarters of the Tehsilee), whom he had assisted with charitable works in hard times and built for them a well, and dug a tank at his own cost in the village. When rebellion spread he naturally looked for aid from his old friends and they responded to his call and came to protect the Tehsildaree. Men of Sanda also came to assist. On the 11th of June, the Kamasin men turned traitors, drove off the Sanda zaminders, and themselves attacked and plundered the Thanah and Tehsildaree, robbed the Treasury containing about Rs.4,000 destroyed the record and dismantled the Government buildings. They drove the old Tehsildar and his Amlah with nothing but the clothes on his backs."

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

The Tahsildar, however, found protection and assistance in the village of Sanda and with the help of its zamindars he returned to Kamasin, fought the people there and burnt the village.⁷ The Tahsildar, solicitious in the eyes of the English Collector was identified by the people solely in terms of the political authority that he represented. It did not matter what he was, it was important what he stood for, as an agent of the British and an outsider.

Underlying the rebellion of the people was a specified selection of the adversaries and the targets of attack. Violence was not directed arbitrarily but consciously against certain identified antagonists who directly or indirectly denoted British rule. Tahsildars and thanadars were the most obvious symbols of authority. From them rebellion turned to those who were indirectly associated with it namely the auction - purchasers, decree-holders and the merchants. All contradictions in the diverse relationships of the peasants with others that could be accounted for by the intervention of the British State power were sought to be corrected. Those responsible for such contradictions were attacked. The occasion was also utilised to correct wrongs. The inhabitants of Jalalpur in Hamirpur imprisoned Hyder Hossein Khan, Munsif of that place, in order to recover from him the amount of fines which he had, in his capacity of Munsif, imposed on them.⁸

7. Ibid.

8. Translation of a letter from C. Chester, Commissioner of Allahabad to Sreemunt Narain Rao and Sreemunt Madhav Rao, 30th July 1857. Banda Coll. Records. Box No.2, Sl.No.30, File No.31, Dept.XVIII.(U.P.R.A.A.).

In Banda, the news of the departure of the British officials from the capital 'spread ... like wild fire'.⁹ Following the collapse of authority, rebellion reigned supreme. As villages rose in all direction, auction-purchasers and decree - holders were ousted and travellers and merchandize plundered. This feature was replicated elsewhere too. G.H.Freeling, the Collector and Magistrate of Hamirpur observed with dismay in his narrative of the rebellion ;

" I need scarcely say that the general feature in the rebellion here, has been the universal ousting of all bankers, buniyas, Marwarees etc, from landed property in the district, by whatever means they acquired it, whether at auction, by private sale or otherwise, ... it is strange that in no instance do the class so favoured by our rule, the bankers and other traders appear to have been able to keep their own in the struggle".¹⁰

Plunder was an act of protest that was undertaken throughout the period of rebellion against all contrary forces.

Villages fell upon neighbouring towns. The town and bazar of Rajapur in Banda was attacked by the inhabitants of surrounding villages but the latter were repulsed by the local merchants who got together a large force.¹¹ The large and wealthy village of Orun, south east of the town of Banda in pargana Budousa was plundered by the neighbouring zamindars and peasants.¹² Every mutiny in the town

9. N.E., Banda, Part II, para 8. p. 325.

10. Narrative of Events connected with the Mutiny at Hamirpur. By George H. Freeling, Collector and Magistrate, para 19. p. 493.

11. N.E., Banda, para 10, p. 316.

12. List of Persons sentenced under special Commission of Acts XI, XIV and XVI of 1857 for the week ending 4th December 1858. From the Special Commissioner Banda, 31st December, 1858. Banda Coll. Records, Sl.No.40, File No.41(II), Dept. XVIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

followed by the expulsion of authority, precipitated loot and plunder by the local townmen, the soldiers and the neighbouring villagers. On the 8th of June, F.O. Mayne received a verbal message in Banda from the Deputy Collector, that a body of mutinous cavalry were crossing the river Jamuna into the district. "The verbal message was given to me in open cutcherry by the sowar, and spread like wild fire. The budmashes rose in the city, and plundering commenced." ¹³ As soon as the English left Banda, the soldiers and the local inhabitants fell upon the property that the former left behind. It was much the same in Hamirpur and Orai. The soldiers revolted in Hamirpur on the 14th of June 1857, joined shortly by the Bundela auxiliaries. The official description of the incident ran as follows :

"During the occupation of the town the sepoys plundered the wealthy men of the place and committed all sorts of excesses. On their departure the villagers in the neighbourhood completed the work of pillage and destruction of property ... The usual jacquerie commenced throughout the district, and the inevitable war between ex-zamindars and auction purchasers". ¹⁴

The Tahsildar and Treasurer in Orai were also plundered by the soldiers and the people of the town after the English officials departed under the pressure of rebellion. ¹⁵

13. N.E., Banda, para.14, p. 318.

14. From C. Chester, Commissioner 4th Division. To Lt. Col. R. Strachey, Allahabad, 22nd October, 1857. Home Dept. Public Branch, 27th Nov. 1858. No.6 (N.A.I.).

15. From Munshi Sheopershad, Kanpur. 26th August 1857 To Lt. G. Browne. Home Dept. Public Branch, 6th Nov. 1857, No.18 (N.A.I.).

Such depredations were also demonstrations of the strength lying in the area of unorganised politics in a situation where the British structure of order and rule was inverted. Since the unit of power, at this level, rested on a village and its internal relationships, the assumption of authority by one such village spilled over to the adjoining region. What appeared to the British "... outrages committed by the village communities one upon another",¹⁶ were to those involved, articulations of their political power. Soon after the outbreak of mutinies in the neighbouring stations, inhabitants of a village Gurha in the south of Banda, joined the rebellion. They stopped roads, plundered travellers and neighbouring villages. Situated on the banks of the Baghin river, Gurha was surrounded for miles by ravines. Few who passed through them escaped plunder. The peasants and the zaminders of Gurha tried to stop the English officials who were fleeing from Banda to Nagode. The greater force of the latter, however, deterred them from doing so.¹⁷ Inhabitants and zamindars of Murka, a village in the Augasi pargana also in Banda, after overthrowing the tahsili establishment at Buberu overran a number of neighbouring villages. They "... mustered to attack Banda before the British left it, and carried on a

16. From Maj. W.C. Western, Deputy Commissioner 1st Class Sagar, To Maj. W.C. Erskine, Commissioner Saugor Dvn, Sagar the 20th July 1857. For. Sec. Cons. 30th Sept. 1857, No. 573 (N.A.I.).

17. List of Persons sentenced under the Special Commissioner of Act. XI, XIV & XVI of 1857 for the week ending 25th December 1858. Banda Coll. Records. Sl. No. 40, File No. 41 (II) Dept. XVIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

permanent system of plunder and riot".¹⁸ The people of Pipri, a village in pargana Pailani stopped the surrounding roads, set up their own king and committed universal plundering.¹⁹ In order to translate their power into effective control, the villagers overran regions adjoining their immediate place of residence. The commonest means of assertion for the people was pillage. Plunder and destruction were what they themselves had to withstand from their political superiors. In the inverted situation of 1857, they merely duplicated the modus operandi of those above them, to ascertain their own power.

Even if for a short time, the peasants of Banda operated in a world totally their own. To use F.O.Mayne's description.

"Tulwars and matchlocks were scarce in Bundelkhand, but armed with spears and scythes, and iron-bound lathies, and extemporary axes, formed of chopping knives fastened on sticks, they imagined to be warriors, chose their own kings, and defied all comers. Never was revolution more rapid - never more complete".²⁰

Arming themselves was among the principal ways in which the people sought to demonstrate their assumed authority. A group of European officials accompanied by their troops on their way from Mahoba to Nagode enroute Banda, observed that the people of every village they passed turned out armed.²¹

18. List of persons sentenced from the week ending 26th June 1858. From Spl. Commr. F.O.Mayne, 10th July 1858, Banda Coll. Records, Sl.No.40, File No.41 (II) Dept. XVIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

19. Ibid.

20. N.E., Banda, para 8, p. 325.

21. From Maj. R.W.W.Ellis, To the Secretary to the Government of India, Nagode, 24th June 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857, No.177, (N.A.I.).

What was remarkable of the movement of 1857 was not only such tangible and positive actions of political assertion undertaken by the people but their inverted allegiance towards and altered perception of authority. The image of authority was deliberately belittled and desecrated. It was such imageries that revealed the existing opposition to authority. The circulation of rumours in 1857 was a major constituent in this region of protest. Rumours precede or follow the actual outbreak of rebellion; they do not cause it. But it is in a situation of insurrection that rumours take shape, spread and grow. Rumours in 1857 reflected the popular perception of the British State in times of a crisis. They reinforced fears and hopes related to authority and rebellion that formed the essential psychological support to active resistance. Rumours formed one of the varied manifestations of popular opposition to authority. Though not potent enough to challenge the British norms of order, such muted opposition sustained the situation of rebellion.

Rumours in 1857 were bred by certain incidents which seemed extraordinary, mysterious and ominous. The circulation of the news of such unaccountable events on the eve of a crisis or during one, sustained and spread a feeling of uncertain times. In 1857, this feeling was translated into the belief that British rule had decisively come to an end.

The most well-known of such unusual occurrences was

the distribution of chapatis. Reports of their circulation come chiefly from districts of northern India in Rohilkhand and the upper Doab. P.G.Scot, an officer of the 12th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry at Nowgong, in his account refers to chapatis being sent around in Central India as well.²² No one knew the origins of such chapatis or what they implied. Every area interpreted the incident in its own terms; but every annotation, associated with the popular attitude towards authority, saw the latter on the brink of a collapse.

The pattern in which the chapatis were circulated was that the person who received two of them were to make ten more and circulate them in the adjoining village. Usually, the village chowkidars were assigned the task.²³ In Central India, Scot described a singular nature of this incident and its implications to the local people. "It is remarkable that the cakes are distributed by the hands of the very lowest castemen that can be found; and the natives say that it is intended by Government to force or bribe the headmen to eat them, and thus lose their caste."²⁴ English officials in North India were hard put to explain such a remarkable incident and the rapidity with which the chapatis travelled, perplexed them. The course that the circulation took, suggested to them the possibility of its starting point being in Bundelkhand or somewhere further South.²⁵

22. Capt. P.G.Scot, Personal Narrative of the Escape from Nowgong to Banda and Nagode. (n.d.), p. 1.

23. Richard Collier, 'The Sound of Fury - an account of the Indian Mutiny' (London, 1963) p. 22.

24. Scot, op.cit., p. 1.

25. J.A.B. Palmer, 'The Mutiny outbreak at Meerut, 1857' (Cambridge, 1966), Chapter I, p. 1.

But in Bundelkhand itself, the spread of chapatis did not appear to have featured very prominently. A little South in Panna, the Raja mentioned four strange things that occurred in the last four years to P.G.Scot.

"First, a saying passed from village to village that the sister should protect the brother-meaning that the weak should have power over the strong - i.e. the natives over the English; Second, the women of each village went to the Zamindar of another village and said that they had come to plunder him, and he then gave them some clothes, etc; thirdly came the chupattis or small cakes: and fourthly, for the last year, there had been a demand for diamonds, the staple produce of Punna, such as was never known before". 26

The notion of authority was turned upside down through beliefs, sayings and unusual rituals. To borrow Ranajit Guha's analysis, such beliefs seen as Omens "appear in 'moments of collision' when the generally accepted semioticization of a social or political order comes under question and unforeseen options are opened up, when for instance the foundations of a ruling power are seriously threatened as" was that of "the Raj by the revolt of 1857". Such rumours turned beliefs acted both as forces of mobilisation and transmission of resistance and rebellion against authority.²⁷

The altered perception of authority was manifested in the widespread opposition that British fugitives faced from the villagers everywhere in Bundelkhand. Fleeing English officials confirmed the news of the collapse of authority,

26. Scot, op.cit., p. 39.

27. Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, (Delhi, 1983), p.245.

reinforcing the belief that the British rule that has been set aside, would never return. The sight of these officials driven out of their respective stations was a spectacle of authority in retreat. Even though the villagers did not always attack or assault them, a lack of sympathy for the foreigners marked their general behaviour.

J.W.Sherer, the Magistrate of Fatehpur were among the first to confront the villagers in Banda. Evacuating his station, Sherer accompanied by others crossed over into Banda, intending to proceed further south towards Rewa and Nagode and eventually to safer places in the east. They were ferried across the Jamuna by the Deputy Collector of Banda and put up in a serai (tavern) in a fairly large village called Chillatara, in the first week of June. While they were resting in the village, Muhammad Sirdar Khan, the Deputy Collector reported to Sherer that the village "... was growing uproarious". Everyone wished the English would leave early. Sherer recounted his experience,

" Upto this, (till the alarm was created) though one's orders had not been worth much, still some sort of authority adhered to us and the behaviors of the people had been respectful. But after the Deputy had gone to see what the state of things really was two Governments peons, or messengers, came and sat ostentatiously near me. "I say" cried one, "What would you give for this thing?" holding up his chuorass or brazen badge. "Four annas", his comrade replied " The brass is worth that - but the Govt?" rejoined the first speaker, with a sneer." 28

The above conversation, deliberately made within the listening

28. Francis Cornwallis Maude, Memoirs of the Mutiny with which is incorporated the Personal Narrative of John Walter Sherer. Vol.I. 2nd edition, (London & Sydney, 1894), Chapter VI, p. 141.

reaches of an English magistrate, reflected the popular perception of authority. So depreciated had its image become in people's views that it could be verbally abused. The insult that the people had to bear was now hurled at the erstwhile rulers. In the inverted situation where sisters protected their brothers and women plundered the zamindar, peasants could very well turn their masters out. Fleeing Englishmen confirmed hopes in the victory of rebellion.

While leaving the village, Sherer noticed a large number of peasants squatting along the two sides of the street. Some sat in shops, some on walls or other such elevated places, while a tall, stout zamindar with a sword in his hand, was gesticulating and addressing the gathering. As soon as the main body of English fugitives left the village, the people ran after them and looted the carts in their rear.²⁹

In the next village that the group arrived, Sherer noted "The villagers looked furtive and odd, and exchanged glances in a curious, undecided way. They were anxious to know if the Deputy was coming out again, and laughed amongst themselves when he said he was".³⁰ The credibility of the British power was completely lost. As the fugitives proceeded towards Banda, villages in their rear, rose in rebellion.³¹

29. Ibid, pp. 141-142.

30. Ibid, p. 143.

31. N.E., Banda, para. 14. p. 318.

In Banda, the mutiny and the widespread rebellion caused the officials there evacuate the station as well. Fugitives from Fatehpur were now accompanied by the officials of Banda and together they hurried southwards. On their way to Kalinjar and then to Nagode, they met people inclined to resist in two places.³² They reached Kalinjar and put up at the thana which was at the centre of the village. In the village, the sweat-meat sellers refused to serve the English even when offered money. The latter were forced to put the coin down and help themselves to the sweets. Shorn of authority, their only identity was that of being Christians and therefore, untouchables.³³ Opportunities were seldom lost to demonstrate the altered situation. Sherer recollected about the same day in Kalinjar,

- " In the afternoon, too a curious demonstration took place. Some Mahajuns, ... who had apparently hired men to watch and guard their houses, made them all parade in a procession, past our thana. They did not say anything. So the idea evidently was to upbraid us with our loss of authority. There was a disposition, too, in some of the youngmen towards evening to hang about and interfere with the preparation for starting. However, before sunset we were on the march again ..." 34

The English were as sensitive as the people were aware, of the reversal.

Scattered groups of Europeans were found scampering over the countryside in search of safe refuge. Nearly everywhere, the villagers received them with avowed hostility. A band of English officials left Nowgong on their way east to Allahabad.

32. Ibid.

33. Sherer, op.cit., p. 161.

34. Ibid.

On their march through the southern parganas of Hamirpur and Banda specially between Mahoba and the town of Banda, the English witnessed the intense antagonism that villagers nurtured towards them. Almost every village they passed, mobilized force to attack and plunder them. P.G.Scot, who was one of the officers to escape noted that nearly every village was gaurded and armed with whatever weapon the people could muster. Light countrymade matchlocks and big bamboos were all that the peasants had but now they proved more effective than the British arms. Recollecting an incident in village Banda Jawaharpur, Scot remarked "I never felt the inefficiency of the musket till that day; shots from clumsy village made matchlocks were coming among us with awful force, while our shorts fell half-way".³⁵ It was in this village that the fugitives arrived a little after sunrise on the 18th of June in 1857, to find crowds of men with bamboos in every corner. They encamped under some trees opposite a pass, that was full of armed men. These men demanded thousand rupees for letting the English pass and the latter were forced to agree to a compromise with the armed villagers. At two in the morning, the fugitives were attacked and in the encounter lost one of their officers. This was perhaps an extreme instance of opposition but hostile reaction to the presence of the English was a general and fairly typical phenomenon. This was largely a product, as Scot diagnosed, of "... the feeling throughout the country ... that our rule was at an end."³⁶ The British were pursued all the way to Banda

35. Scot, op.cit., pp. 21-22.

36. Ibid, pp. 20-23.

till they were forced to broke up into small groups. At a large village called Kabrai, "... none abused us in any way. One man, standing almost naked on a raised platform, drew his sword, and held it up aloft as we passed, in a very fine attitude. He was quite a study for a painter. It was an admirable declaration on the nation having drawn the sword to free themselves. I had no idea Hindostanee could assume so grand an attitude".³⁷ Political assertion at times of crisis took multiple forms. Times were uncertain as the formal structure of authority lay crippled and maimed.

Passage of fleeing English fugitives through a village created tremendous stir and excitement among the people. They swarmed around to watch the officials on the run. Scot with three others who had been separated from the rest of the party were taken prisoners at the village Goera Mugli in pargana Banda.³⁸ Scot recounted their experience,

"One abominable old man signed with his hand, that my head would be chopped off, and he told me by his face that he thought I deserved it, and that he would, as a religious man, rejoice in and be benefited by the spectacle. When we got to the centre of the village, another devout Mussulman, a man whose horse, saddle, dress etc. made me think him a rebel trooper, welcomed us with supressed fervour, and muttered "well done". All around us were Mahommedans, the people we had most reason to fear. They were all greatly gratified at sight of four unbelievers in their power. Some attempts were made to rob us: but there was an ominous formality, ... A tom-tom was sent for and a proclamation made outside after its din was over and we were desired to

37. Ibid., p. 26.

38. Ibid.

listen to Zunowar Ali being proclaimed king of Delhi and India ... The cavalry saint was very busy, having meetings and committees that deliberated, or pretended to do so, in different places."

The English were then disarmed, plundered and put on horses to be taken to the Nawab of Banda.³⁹

Maj. R.W.W.Ellis who was with another splintered group had a different experience to narrate. As armed men opposed them in every village.

"... the Sepoys proposed that all our arms should be taken from us and that we should be marched as prisoners in the midst of them to Banda, thinking thus to protect their officers. We halted atlast at Kuserse where the people disbelieved the tales that the Sepoys told and wanted to take us from them by force, to deal with us themselves: ..."

The soldiers gradually began to drop out and the English beat a hasty retreat. Summing up his experience, Ellis wrote "... (We were) pursued by nearly every village near which we showed ourselves and suffered greatly from want of water".⁴⁰

British Officers who fled from the district station of Hamirpur met with worse fate. Pursued by the mutineers, they rushed to the river bank and got on to a boat to cross the Jamuna. The soldiers fired on them and forced them to jump into the river. They swam to the shore and reached a place close to a village called Rampur. The people of the village fell on them, plundered them to all they had and severely beat them up. Thereafter the four officials got separated. Two of them, Lloyd and Grant swam with the current and reached the Hamirpur bank near the junction of Betwa and

39. Ibid, pp. 31-32

40. From R.W.W.Ellis To the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Nagode, 24th June, 1857. For. Sec. Progs. 31st July 1857, No.177 (N.A.I.).

Jamuna, three miles below the town. Here they stayed for five days from the 14th to the 19th of June. During this time, many were aware of their presence and some even helped them. On the 18th evening, three Ahirs, Gangadin, Kalua and Chitaia discovered their place of concealment. Lloyd gave his ring to Kalua to be given to the former's Sherishtadar. The Ahir instead took it to the mutineers. The Englishmen were thereafter, brought to the Kacheri compound and killed. ⁴¹

Popular reaction to the situation after June 1857 was largely a product of the widespread conviction that the British rule had ended. It was this notion of authority annihilated that underlay the entire movement at all levels and acted as a unifying force. Scot remarked on it and Mayne attributed to it the principal reason behind the active rebellion of the villagers. The latter wrote,

" As for the people, ruined as they were by over assessment and bad seasons, and half starving, still they would I think not have risen in rebellion, if they had been left to themselves. It was only when excited by the reports from other Districts, and hearing of the excesses committed elsewhere, and of what was then supposed the total massacre of all Europeans at Allahabad, that they too came to the conclusion that the British rule was now at an end, and every man had best take care of himself ". ⁴²

This belief was largely instrumental in beginning the rebellion and sustaining it.

41. N.E., Hamirpur, para.9, p. 491.

42. N.E., Banda, para.11, p. 317.

The above account on the rebellion of the people is conspicuous by the absence of reference to certain areas chiefly the western districts of Lalitpur, Jhansi and Jalaun. Civil Rebellion here was recounted in the official reports in terms of the uprising of the thakurs as the politics of the thakurs dominated the politics of rebellion in this region. This domination operated in two ways. First, the British authority stood most threatened by the force of the rebellion of thakurs in these three districts. It was their uprising that challenged the State directly and immediately. Suppressing the Rajput actions was thus the principal end of counter-insurgency forces, the only panacea to disorder. It is small wonders therefore, that British officials spent pages describing the features of Rajput protest. Those below them, were taken to be mere appendages to the dominant power holders of the countryside.

Second, the stronghold of the thakurs was truly a pervading political phenomenon in these districts. The protest of the villagers was thus linked with that of the thakurs. The connection, inevitable under the given political circumstances, usurped the independence and autonomy of political actions of the peasants and other subordinate classes in the villages. In the combined opposition to authority, one complemented the other. But while the uprisings of the thakurs emerged as the central theme, those of the villagers slipped into the roles of accessories. The points of convergence of the politics of the two levels in these districts cannot be categorically spelt out. They were subsumed in one general, concerted movement directed towards overthrowing authority.

6.2 Prolonged rebellion till March 1858.

This was a period when the politics of resistance and rebellion was directed by the dominant groups, at one level, the regional power magnates, at the other, the thakurs. In the process of dividing the country among themselves, the different Rajas carved out territories for themselves. Over their separate dominion, the Chiefs imposed and collected revenue. In Banda, the Nawab of Banda and the Jagirdar of Klrwi shared parganas, as did the Raja of Chirkhari, the Rani of Jhansi, the Jagirdar of Gursrai in their respective districts. In Southern Bundelkhand, the thakurs held sway over Lalitpur and parganas in southern Jhansi. British control was replaced by the alternate rule of these Chiefs.

- The regional potentates represented the politics of a
 - level that stood over the local domains of the villages.
- The two regions coexisted but not necessarily in a relationship of complementarity. Beyond collecting revenue from the villages, Laxmi Bai or Ali Bahadur had little to do with them. For the peasant of the village, the Chiefs existed only in the guise of the agents who came to collect revenue. Otherwise, for both the immediate context determined the course of action that each pursued. Two villages in Hamirpur drove out the agents of the Nana sent out to collect revenue from them.⁴³ Their basic difference allowed for contradiction

43. From Lt. Col. R. Strachey, Secy. to Govt. Central Provinces. To Cecil Beadon, Esq., Secy. to the Govt. of India, Home Dept. Allahabad, 29th January 1858. Narrative for the week ending 16th January 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82. 1858 (U.P.S.A.L.).

as this above incident stands to testify.

For the cultivators, September was the crucial month for sowing kharif crops, the principal produce of Bundelkhand. By September, the British had been completely overthrown in Bundelkhand and the people could go **back** to their fields in peace. They seemed to have done so as the British forces marching on this region early in 1858, found villages with cultivated fields.

In the intervening period between September 1857 and March 1858 the fate of rebellion hung on the actions and manoeuvres of Tantya Topi, Rani of Jhansi, the soldiers and some leading thakurs. The tussle for power was staged over the country side whose inhabitants remained mute spectators to the contestants pitched in close battle. The brunt often fell on the villages, forcing the people to desert. The inhabitants of Kunch and the people of the thana deserted that place as did most of them in Kalpi.⁴⁴

6.3 The last lap of resistance.

Desertion was also the immediate response of the people to the march of British counter insurgency forces. An official, who accompanied Hugh Rose in Bundelkhand observed about the region they travelled before coming before Jhansi,

"The country we marched through, in reaching the place, (Jhansi) gave little evidence of the change

44. Intelligence of 15 April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, Nos. 134-135 (N.A.I.).

that had come over it since last traversed by Europeans. Excepting that a few or no inhabitants were seen, the cultivation had been carried on as of old, and the fields were teeming with corn ripe for the sickle; but it seemed as though a plague had swept over the land, and carried off its occupants. The villages were deserted, and grass grew rank and untrampled in the streets: while the crane and long-legged wading birds, which love solitude, haunted the tanks and waters". 45

Desertion at one level, reflected people's fear of English retribution but it also was a form of protest against authority and a refusal to submit to it. Peasants of villages adjoining independent States without exception fled to the latter region. "The complaint of want of cooperation on the part of the rural population and their not supplying British detachment with information or assistance is not peculiar to Bundelkhand. It arises in part from the villages being deserted on the approach of British columns and the alarm they create." 46 Most of the inhabitants of the Bhandere pargana in Jhansi went over to the neighbouring native States. 47 The British detachment at Malthone observed that a great many of the villages in southern Lalitpur were being deserted by the inhabitants. 48 Even after the English

45. John Henry Sylvester, Recollections of the Campaign in Malwa and Central India under Maj. Gen. Sir Hugh Rose G.C.B. (Bombay, 1860) pp. 84-85.

46. From Sir R.M. Hamilton Agent Governor - General for Central India To the Secy. to Govt. of India, Foreign Department, 15th February 1859. Mil.Dept. Progs. 18th March 1859, No.361 (N.A.I.).

47. Intelligence of 15th April 1858. For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858. Nos. 134-135 (N.A.I.).

48. Copy of a letter from Maj. Gaussen from Camp Malthone to Brig. Sage, Commanding Division of the Army, 16th June 1858, For. Sec. Progs. 18th Dec. 1858, No.232 (N.A.I.).

set themselves up once again in the different districts, desertion of villages was something they had to contend with. About Banda, it was reported in July 1858, " The district generally quiet, but in many of the villages the entire population had fled and settled in the independent states, whence though no criminal charge is made against them they will not return".⁴⁹ Villages contiguous to jungles were invariably deserted, the people taking shelter in them.⁵⁰

The English State ultimately staged a comeback and reestablished itself. By sheer force, they suppressed the rebellion of the people. Villages were marked out and burnt, people captured, were hanged. Before the vehemence of authority, the subordinate classes were left with little options but to submit. But they did not submit without murmur. Resistance continued whenever it could be mustered. The people took advantage of the widespread insurrection of the thakurs and often deliberately aligned their rebellion to those of the former.

Resistance to the English in 1858 resorted to two major forms of expressions - direct opposition to the English apparatus of power and indirect protest demonstrated through assistance and support afforded to the insurgent thakurs. Every district in Bundelkhand had certain villages which till

49. From Bayley to Edmonstone, 29th July 1858. Narrative for the week ending 18th July 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82, 1858 (U.P.S.A.L.).

50. Weekly narrative from Jaitpur, 1st August, 1859, From the Magistrate of Hamirpur to the Commissioner, Jhansi Division, Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.7, Sl.No.21, File No.38, Dept. XIII (U.P.R.A.A.)

the last stood in defiance to authority. In Hamirpur, a large number of villages in the Jalalpur pargana persistently refused to conform to the British order. Zamindars and peasants of villages Chandaur, Lokhar, Atrauli and Dhungwa brought Shankar Singh, a rebel thakur of Kakrohi to Chandaur in July 1858, and made him occupy 27 villages in their vicinity. Likewise residents of Panwar, Lodhipur, Nevada, and Gavipara invited rebel forces in Kalpi to come to Jalalpur.⁵¹ Harprasad Thakur and the peasants of Panwar actually joined the rebels along with those of Manmass and Nawahi, all in the same pargana.⁵² In fact, most of the people in Jalalpur consciously opted for rebellion and resisted encroachments attempted by officials of the Government. This was one of the regions that regularly provided rebels with provisions.⁵³ In the attack on the thana and tahsildari of Rath, the rebels were joined by a large number of villagers, among others, those belonging to mauza Gohanda.⁵⁴ Adjacent to Jalalpur in the east, villagers of Serowlie Buzurg in the Sumerpur pargana sent for two guns in order

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51. From the Thanadar of Jalalpur, 27th July 1858. Hamirpur Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.8, Sl.No.9, File No.9 (U.P.R.A.A.).
52. From the Duffadar of pargana Jalalpur, 17th July, 1858. Hamirpur Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.8, File No.9, Sl.No.9 (U.P.R.A.A.).
53. From the Thanadar of Jalalpur, 17th Aug. 1858 & From the Thanadar of Jalalpur, 6th Sept. 1858. Hamirpur Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta Nos. 8 & 9, Sl.No.9, File No.9, (U.P.R.A.A.)
54. From the Thanadar of Islampur, 24th October 1868. Hamirpur Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.8, Sl.No.10, File No.10 (U.P.R.A.A.).

to attack English boats passing along Jamuna. They also erected batteries against forces sent from Kanpur and gave the latter a determined battle.⁵⁵ When revenue collection began in July in Madhogarh, Jalaun, the villagers called the rebels and the collection had to be stopped.⁵⁶ The Naib Tahsildar of Indurki complained in July 1858, that the people of the villages joined Burjore Singh in his depredations for plunder and for food.⁵⁷ Instances of villagers joining one or the other thakur leader on his expeditions are replete in the accounts. When Burjore Singh encamped at Salia Buzurg in Tahsil Deva of Jalaun, people from the adjoining villages joined him.⁵⁸ Usually when a particular town or village was attacked, the people of the surrounding areas joined in the plunder. Burjore Singh occupied Madhogarh in Jalaun, in July 1858, with a force of 500 men. Their number was increased by the villagers of Gursenda, Madaripura and others in the neighbourhood of Madhogarh.⁵⁹ Similarly, after Jalaun was taken in July 1858 by Burjore Singh, most of the people who joined in the plunder of the town lived

55. From G.H.Freeling, Coll. of Hamirpur To F.W.Pinkney, Commr. of Jhansi Divn. Hamirpur, 26th Aug. 1858. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.4, Sl.No.86, File No.129, Dept.XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

56. From Lala Gulzarilal Muharee (writer), thana Madhogarh, July 1858. Jalaun Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.1, Sl.No.3 (U.P.R.A.A.).

57. From Naik tahsildar Anderkhi, 10th July 1858. Jalaun Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.1, File No.1. (U.P.R.A.A.).

58. From Md. Ali Khan, Thanadar of Deva, 4th Aug. 1858. Jalaun, Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.1, File No.1. (U.P.R.A.A.).

59. Report of the Dy. Magistrate, Jalaun, Kunwar Daraz Allee, 28th July 1858. Jalaun. Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.5, File No.124. (U.P.R.A.A.).

2 or 3 koss away from it.⁶⁰ Residents of Bahadurpur and Bhumrone also in pargana Madhogarh, on the other hand, joined Dowlat Singh in plundering and overrunning the country around.⁶¹

It was relatively easier for the English to reimpose their authority over villages in Banda. In the absence of rebel thakurs leading large bands of followers, the rural population had no alternate, organised source of strength to fall back on and lay exposed before the British forces. Individually, villages resisted as long as they could. In May 1858, it was reported that, "Several villages in various directions still remain in open hostility and Brig Whitlock is yet unable to detach a force to punish them. Revenue is scarcely at all collected".⁶² Mayne wrote about villages of pargana Pailani, north of the river Ken that they "... are inclined more or less to side with the rebels and refuse to attend on the tahsildar".⁶³ The Muslims of Moudha and several people of the neighbouring villages actively supported the rebels in the latter's combat with authority throughout May and June 1858.⁶⁴

60. From Dy. Magistrate Kunwar Daraz Allee, 7th August 1858. Jalaun Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.5, File No.124 (U.P.R.A.A.).

61. Trans. of an Urzi of 23rd June 1859 from the Naib Tahsildar of Indurki, C.O.J. Basta No.11.5(iii), Sl.No.41, File No.46, Dept.XXI of 1859 (U.P.R.A.A.).

62. From Bayley to Edmonstone, Allahabad. 1st June 1858. Narrative for the week ending 16th March 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82, 1858 (U.P.S.A.L.).

63. From F.O.Mayne Collector & Magistrate To C.B.Thornhill Esq. Offg. Commissioner for the 4th Division, Banda 17th May 1858. Mil. Dept. Progs. 4th June 1858. No.507 (N.A.I.).

64. From F.O.Mayne, Magt. & Coll. of Banda To C.B.Thornhill, Offg. Commr. for the 4th or Allahabad Dvn. Banda, 21st May, 1858, Mil. Progs. 4th June 1858, No.511 (N.A.I.).

The more ubiquitous form of protest of the villages was extending assistance and shelter to rebel thakurs and their band of followers. Such assistance was one of the most crucial factors that enabled the thakurs to resist authority for as long as they did, their apprehension being impossible given the general sympathy prevailing in their favour.

Writing about Jalaun in June 1859, an English officer wrote, "The district is a very large one, the sympathies of the villagers entirely with the rebels. Information there is none, or what is far worse only false information, and I find it impossible even from the inhabitants of a plundered village, to extract any reliable or useful information respecting the rebels".⁶⁵ Thus genuine sympathy coexisted with the fear of thakur reprisals in the event of assistance being withheld. The rebels "... plunder no village which furnishes them except if it chances to be one belonging to a chief or prince, notoriously on the British side, and to escape pillage supplies will always be delivered".⁶⁶

Fear apart, there was a sense of identification with the interests and politics of the thakurs. Every leading thakur had his own region of influence within which he received

65. From R.D.Osborn. Lt. 2nd Sikh Cavalry Comdg. at Lahar, To the Dy. Commissioner, Orai, Camp Mohana, 23rd June 1859. C.O.J. Basta No.11.5(iii), Sl.No.41, File No.46, Dept. XXI of 1859 (U.P.R.A.A.).

66. From R.M.Hamilton To Secy. to Govt. of India, For. Dept. 15th Feb. 1859. Mil. Dept. Progs. 18th March 1859, No.361.(N.A.I.).

staunch and inflicⁿching support. One such village was Nunora in pargana Panwari on the south west of Hamirpur. It was described in the official language as, "... a village notorious in every way for assisting the rebels".⁶⁷ The village was fined 3,000 rupees because the rebels always drew supplies and money from here. They came at all hours of the day and night to collect replenishments. Therefore, "Every inhabitant of the village is doubtless an accomplice in the crime" and "the whole village was implicated".⁶⁸ Burjore Singh and Dowlat Singh were always supported by villagers in Kuchwahagar. Village Lahar in western Jalaun was another major base from where the two thakurs regularly drew their supplies from.⁶⁹ In the south-western corner of the Hamirpur district, villages bordering on Jhansi in the Kashipur thana, provided shelter and protection to Chattar Singh and his followers.⁷⁰ Withholding information from the government officials and hiding rebels were commonly resorted to by the villagers as was reported about the people of Sachowra in Southern Hamirpur.⁷¹ Usually villages adjoining the original home and landholding of the thakurs extended support

67. Report on Nunora, parg. Panwari, 21st Oct. 1859, Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.1, Sl.No.8, File No.18, Dept. XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

68. Ibid.

69. From R.M.Hamilton To the Secy. to Govt. of India, For. Dept., 15th Feb. 1859. Mil. Dept. Progs. 18th March 1859, No.361 (N.A.I.).

70. To the Commr. 21st Jan. 1859. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.2, Sl.No.22, File No.46, Dept.XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

71. From E.N.Griffiths, Dy. Magt. To G.A.Freeling, Magt. Hamirpur, Camp Raori, 6th Dec. 1858. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.1, Sl.No.21. File No.5, Dept.XIII. (U.P.R.A.A.).

under every circumstance and such support

continued as long as the resistance of the thakurs lasted. Villages in the jagir of Alipura always provided for the needs of Bakht Singh. Even Despat found shelter and provisions here. Hindupat, the jagirdar was loyal to the British. But over the people of the villages he had little control and they continued to assist the rebels.⁷² In the wake of such rural support, the English were hard put to track the thakurs down. The forces of disorganised politics proved too strong for the organised machinery to combat. One of the reasons why rebellion persisted so long in Bundelkhand was the internal strength of its politics, a product of popular participation and thakur leadership.

As late as the mid 60s, the ^{Deputy} Inspector General of Police on a visit to Jaitpur found,

"... the general feeling of the people whether actuated by feudal attachment to the family of Nuneh Dewan or fear of his vengeance or that of his relatives, is, in that part of the District decidedly favourable to him, in some cases, actively so, villagers supplying him and his followers with money food etc. and in nearly all others by passive assistance and defeat of all efforts made by the Police to get information".⁷³

Debi Singh of Dongra continued to elude apprehension till 1862. "Favoured either through friendship, or fear, by the whole population of the country (Lalitpur and Sagar districts), with boundless jungles and retreats to run to, in the adjacent native states, hunting them about the

72. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.7, File No.23, Sl.No.19. Dept. XIII. (U.P.R.A.A.).

73. From Capt. T. Dennehy. Dy. Inspector General Jhansi Division To Lt. C.A.Dodd. Personal Asstt. to the Inspector General of Police of the N.W.Provinces and C.O.J. Box No.14, Sl.No.85, File No.107, Dept. XXI of 1866 (U.P.R.A.A.).

country was unproductive of no good whatever(sic)".⁷⁴
 After Devi Singh's death, his son inherited the tradition of rebellion and kept it up till the late 60s. Villages who provided the thakur with assistance and shelter openly declared that they would not give him up.⁷⁵ This was in 1868, when the mantle of Queen's supremacy was tightly tucked around all the corners of India. Peasants of remote villages evolved their own methods of piercing through the shroud of power.

Betraying a thakur to authority involved a question of honour. Pujari Khangar of village Khuma near Puthari, between Nowgong and Gerowli, abused the sepoys of Gerowli state for having ^{taken} Aman Singh, an associate of Despat prisoner in 1860. He told them there would always be a stain on them for having given up a thakur.⁷⁶

Inhabitants of village Rawatpur in the district of Hamirpur killed a policemen because he happened to be there on that day when the rebels were passing through, early in 1865.⁷⁷ The son of the zamindar in Rajpura village also in Hamirpur was murdered because he had let out information about the rebels to the authorities.⁷⁸

74. From Capt. T.A. Corbett, Dy. Commissioner of Lullutpoor, To Maj. F.W. Pinkney, Commr. of Division, Jhansi. Camp. Lullutpoor, 24th Feb. 1862. C.O.J. Box No.14, Sl.No.79, File No.115, Dept.XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

75. C.O.J. Box No.14, Sl.No.76, File No.118, Dept.XXI (U.P.R.A.A.).

76. To C.J. Richards, Magistrate of Hamirpur. From Stratton, Nowgong 26th February, 1860. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.6, File No.100. (U.P.R.A.A.).

77. From J.P. Stratton Esq, Pol. Agent for Bundelkhand To Lt. Col. R.J. Meade, Agent Governor General for Central India, Indore, Camp. Nagoda, 17th May 1865. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.6, Sl.Nos.4-6, File Nos.94-96. Dept. XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

78. Ibid,

A similar incident took place in Mowaband in the Jaitpur pargana of Hamirpur. Bhowan, the zamindar of Bachrehur had purchased the village Mowaband from the Government in the beginning of 1861. In October the same year, when he went to collect revenue, he was murdered. Apart from the antipathy that villagers have for a new purchaser, the principal reason for their action was that Bhowan had been responsible for the apprehension of Omrao and Zalim, Despat's two lieutenants. Mowaband was one of the villages from where Despat and Omrao regularly obtained supplies and information.⁷⁹

6.4 The character of people's rebellion.

Paucity of information and reliance on official sources make the rebellion of the people appear scattered, episodic, almost spasmodic. Unable to overcome the constraints, we can do little better than string together a varied repertoire of actions and behaviour of the people in 1857, ranging from tacit non-cooperation to the forces of authority to avowed opposition. Fundamental to such responses and a factor that made for their unity was the act to negate authority. It was essentially through the behaviour of opposition and negation, that the people worked towards a positive consciousness.⁸⁰ All the forms of rebellion described so far can be seen as conforming to the varied expressions of the act to negate. Driving out government

79. From the Dy. Commissioner, Hamirpur to the Commissioner, Jhansi. 21st December 1861. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.1, Sl.No.7, File No.17, Dept.XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).

80. cf. Ranajit Guha, op.cit., Chapter 2, pp. 18-76.

officials, bankers and mahajans, burning official papers, plundering neighbouring towns were all negative forms of political assertion which to the British seemed acts of wanton destruction. Information on such destruction is comparatively more substantial as the rulers took some pains to establish the basic wantonness of the people, an opinion, most later historians gullibly accepted.

If we, however, arrange these multifarious actions in some order, certain crucial indices to the nature of the people's politics can be identified. Their rebellion, even if seemingly comprised of a series of raids, attacks and destruction, were directed against certain identifiable targets. There is nothing to suggest that these acts were mindless exercises in violence, arbitrarily undertaken against anything that came in the way of the people. They never indulged in wanton destruction.

The first burnt of the people rebellion had to be borne, without exceptions, by the petty government officials, the thanadars and tahsildars, operating in villages. Such men were driven out or physically assaulted primarily because they were agents of the English government. But they were also men from outside, men who were not recruited locally. Those of the government employees who were drawn from the people, the barkandazes and chaprasis, either joined the rebellion or were spared. From removing the more obvious symbols of authority, the actions of the people extended to destroying all vestiges of British rule. Tahsili papers and

government establishments were systematically destroyed. The second set of adversaries that the people identified in rebellion, were the merchants, moneylenders and auction-purchasers, all of whom constituted the power that the British wielded in the countryside. Once again, these targets of attack were consciously discerned as being enemies of the people. Attacks on them and destruction of their property were part of the general movement directed towards negating the structure of authority. They were no licentious indulgence in violence without motive. Nowhere in Bundelkhand, was the people's rebellion in 1857 pitted against local zamindars. The zamindar of the village was taken to be one of the local society that contrived to resist authority. Local dissensions were temporarily overlaid by the need to build a concerted front against the adversary. Allies in rebellion emerged from the detection of the enemies, it was a union in negativity.

Such discrimination of violence at moments of resistance, Ranajit Guha has pointed out, "... represented the emergence of a political consciousness, even if no more than its very 'first glimmer'".⁸¹ In 1857, the expression of such political consciousness went beyond mere acts of destruction. Here, unfortunately, our information is limited. But from what is recorded, some positive actions contrived towards evolving an alternate order can be gathered. F.O. Mayne's description of the people's uprising in Banda, in this

81. Ibid, p. 27.

context, is perhaps most revealing.⁸² The villagers of Banda, the Collector noted, armed themselves either with what they possessed or by making some rough and ready weapons. This was the first positive step on the part of the people towards crystallising their own strength. Getting armed was as much to prevent the reassertion of the forces uprooted, as to defend what was gained. It was therefore, widely undertaken by the people in 1857. English officials fleeing from Nowgong testified this. The second feature that Mayne marked was that the people 'imagined to be warriors' and 'chose their own kings'. There can be no better evidence of political assertion by the people intending to erect an alternate structure of power. They armed themselves as befitting soldiers in defence of an order, the people's order to be ruled by the people's king. Whatever be the limits of such kingdoms, their very emergence spoke of the translated power of the people gained in rebellion. Here, Mayne's third characterisation is important. He said, the villagers 'defied all comers'. The people zealously guarded their fortunes, their own rule against intruders. The Collector himself admitted, 'Never was revolution more rapid/never more complete'.⁸³

These different sets of actions, when arranged, had all the ready makings of an alternate political form of governance . That such constructive actions were no isolated

82. N.E., Banda, para.8, p. 325.

83. Ibid.

exceptions, is evident from P.G.Scot's account.⁸⁴ In Geora Mugli, where Scot and three others were arrested, they heard one Zunawar Ali being proclaimed the king of Delhi and India by the beat of a tom-tom. The Englishman observed that the people followed all the formal ceremonies befitting a government. A local king was nominated and his realm exaggerated to include Delhi and the whole of India. What is remarkable is the very nature of such a declaration. It disguised a tangible expression of the people's hopes and political aspirations. This king, Zunawar Ali held councils, presided over meetings and deliberated over decisions. The English fugitives were eventually **disarmed**, plundered and taken to the Nawab of Banda, who stood as the higher court of appeal. The people placed their kingdoms at a particular **ring** in the hierarchy of power. There was no arbitrary or thoughtless display of people's power, theirs was no random behaviour.

In the second lap of the movement when the English staged a come-back and forced rebellion to go on the defensive after June 1858, the people's initiative in political actions also underwent a change. Their opportunities for constructing alternate forms of rule were being increasingly curtailed. Now, they consciously and deliberately forged alliance with the rebel thakurs. Not having enough strength to resist the return of British power by themselves,

84. P.G.Scot, op.cit., pp. 31-32.

the people joined the thakurs, invited rebels from towns, conceded to the rule of Despat, Burjore Singh or any other local leaders. But they were all positive actions to defend an order that stood in defiance of the British. Therefore, taken as a whole, the rebellion of the people were no spontaneous responses to a situation when the State was subverted. They were all well-conceived acts supported by the vision of a future.

6.5 Forms of mobilisation.

As regards how the people organised themselves and formed definite units of power, official discourses inform us indirectly. People in rebellion were photographed by authority in clusters and collective groups. The only marks of individuality granted to them were specific mention of the names of their villages. Villages were marked out in accordance to their responses to the movement of 1857-58 and all inhabitants were lumped together under either of the two categories - loyals or rebels. Within every village, the inhabitants were marked out, though not often, in terms of their castes. Thus village and caste names were the only brands of recognition allowed to the people in historical accounts of 1857. In every district, certain villages in one sub-division or scattered over many were categorically labelled by the English as being 'notorious'. The Jalalpur pargana in Hamirpur and the Madhogarh pargana of Jalaun were two such areas where villages invariably stood up in support of rebellion and in defiance to authority for as long as they could. In the south, in Lalitpur such defiance

... was more widespread. A Police Report of as late as 1875, used the well-patented language to describe villages in Lalitpur: "There is not one single village in Tehri or Lalitpur where there is not a 'badmash' (meaning an accomplice) ... one village is as bad as the other, and I cannot attempt to name any in particular."⁸⁵ People were clumped together in aggregation under columns denoting their place of residence and their actions.

Identification in terms of caste was less frequently indulged in by the official reporters. Jalalpur in Hamirpur was a part of the country where Lodhis resided in predominating numbers. Rebellion here was largely carried on by the Lodhis. In August 1858, Lodhi zamindars and peasants were seen moving around armed and undertaking depredations on the surrounding regions.⁸⁶ Among the Rajputs, the Pratiharas of villages Jugali and Parera in Jalalpur together with their clansmen in Gujra village of the Orai sub-division, joined in, enmasse with Chattar Singh.⁸⁷ In Jalaun, Dowlat Singh and Burjore Singh drew their sustained support from the Kuchwaha Rajputs in Madhogarh and Indurki. Sengar Rajputs and Gujars were among others to remain persistently

85. From the Police Dept. N.W.P. July 1878. C.O.J. Box No.16, Sl.No.116, File No.141 (U.P.R.A.A.).

86. From the Thanadar of Islampur, reporting from Jalalpur, 22nd Aug. 1858. Hamirpur Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.8, Sl.No.10, File No.10. (U.P.R.A.A.).

87. From Durgaprasad, Thanadar Islampur, 4th Aug. 1858. Hamirpur Dist. Urdu-Persian Records, Basta No.8, Sl.No.10, File No.10 (U.P.R.A.A.).

in defiance of authority.⁸⁸ In areas of Bundela stronghold, Ahirs were the most numerous among the cultivating castes. They staunchly stood by the Bundela thakurs throughout their period of resistance.⁸⁹

In the analysis of the organisation of the people for action in 1857-58, official tendency to aggregate individuals had some validity. For, the rebellion of the people truly evolved through collective participation. Resistance to authority was organised by the cultivators and zamindars of a village together. Here caste segregation very often did not matter for rebellion commanded the support of all. If there were deviates, they were lost in the multitude.

Very useful to our knowledge in this context, are the lists that were prepared in 1858 denoting villages that had been actively in favour of rebellion. Three such lists have been appended to this chapter. These lists were tabulated by junior Indian Officials, tahsildars or below. Written in Urdu, they were sent to the Collector and Magistrate eventually to be preserved in the Collectorate Records Rooms in the district towns. The farthest that such information reached was the Divisional Commissioner's Office but seldom if ever, were they sent to Allahabad or Calcutta.

88. From the Tahsildar of Jalaun, 7th Sept. 1858. List of villages who joined the rebels; From the Tahsildar of Deva, 30th Aug. 1858. Jalaun Dist. Urdu-Persian Records. Basta No.4, File No.94 (U.P.R.A.A.).

89. From W.R.Benson, Offg. Magt. Hamirpur To F.M.Lind, Offg. Commr. Allahabad, Hamirpur, 12th Oct. 1864. Hamirpur Magistracy Records. Box.No.14, Sl.No.85, File No.107, Dept.XXI of 1866 (U.P.R.A.A.).

The rebellion of the people in 1857-58 was seen in the light of their limited base of operations that could easily be overpowered by British forces.

Resistance of the people were indeed localised protests, limited by two primordial linkages which Ranajit Guha defined as territoriality.⁹⁰ Caste-ties and geographical confines of villages were the two principal factors that mobilised the people in the rebellion of 1857-58. The limits of their political visions also coincided with the confines of specific territorial units determined either by habitation or by the spread of caste-linkages. Within that boundary, the people stood together, acted together. In most instances, there were no leaders in distinction to the followers, and even when there were, they like the latter were lost in the oblivion of historical memory.

All the three lists of villages are from the Jalaun district. The first was prepared by the Tahsildar of Jalaun in September 1858, the second by the Tahsildar of Deva and the third by the Naib-Tahsildar of Kunar, the last two dated August, the same year. The first two lists were simply tabulated with names of villages in the left-hand column and remarks on those who joined the rebellion in the right. The third list is relatively more elaborate having three more columns after the one with names of the villages.

All the three, however, reiterate the basic features

90. R. Guha, op.cit., p. 279.

of the people's rebellion in 1857, collectivity in participation, solidarity in actions and indivisibility in visions and perceptions. Out of the 24 villages listed by the Tahsildar of Jalaun (Appendix-A), in 8 instances, the second column put down either that all the people were rebels or that the whole village joined; in five villages, 'some people' were said to have joined. In rest of the eleven villages, members of three castes were specified, thakurs, Sengars and Gujars. The second list of villages in Deva tahsil is no different from the first. Except in two villages where names of two persons were noted, in all the ten, there were either a few Chamars or Lambardars and few others or a few Bhadorias or all the cultivators or just a few persons who joined the rebellion. In short, people's actions in 1857-58 lacked the hierarchic structure of leadership and support. They acted in consonance, their protests comprising of similar motifs of actions, related to experiences of the past and visions of the future. They were equally agreed as regards branding the foe and the friend.

In this respect, the third list (Appendix-C) is certainly more informative. The third column of the list gave names of persons who joined the rebellion, persons who could be identified and specifically marked out as rebels. The fourth column had names of persons who did not join and last contained remarks about the villages as a whole. Of the 25 villages listed, only in 10 could a handful of persons be found as not having joined the rebellion. For, otherwise opposition to authority was an all-pervasive phenomenon in which no one was excepted, Ashraf or Kamin. In 13 villages,

the Naib-Tahsildar remarked in column 5 that the entire village was actively in favour of rebellion. He could make no distinction between one and the other resident of the villages as all were against government. In villages where the inhabitants belonged fundamentally to one caste, Lodhi, Chamar, Ahir or any one of the Rajput clans, collective action in rebellion coincided with ethnic solidarity. But caste ascriptions were no basis for action just as caste-barriers were no hindrance to rebellion. Within a particular village, there could practically be no generalisation. As the third column showed, those joining the rebellion included a cross-section of people ranging from lambardars, chowkidars, patwaris and even a bania to brotherhood of Rajput pattidars, brahmins and kashtkars or cultivators. By virtue of no pre-existing ties, linkages or standing solely could the people's choice for rebellion be understood.

Yet, it was a deliberate choice and a conscious decision on the part of the people to resist authority. The third list categorically states names of villages whose residents 'voluntarily' joined the rebels. Here were people acting of their own volition on the strength of their village. There was no compulsion, there were no outside forces at work to mobilise them. Options were open for while most joined, some kept away from rebellion. But the decision either way was positive and clear. Whether resisting authority or collaborating with it, the people of the villagers were never equivocal or ambivalent.

There was no question of their playing a double game.

The basis on which the people acted in rebellion, was provided by their immediate village. It was politics within that territorial confine that conditioned the protest of the people. The actions by themselves were not forceful enough nor were they clearly spelt out or delineated. The people gathered around local men who became small time leaders and together they undertook loot and plunder. Such local leaders were men like Lyak Singh, Subha Singh or Rup Singh and the villagers joined one or the other as the fourth column of the third list shows. The leaders were as humble and unpretentious as their followers, denied fame or renown. Their importance was short-lived for they emerged and died with rebellion. Their strength, however, lay in the collective participation that they commanded and in the fact that people in action in most instances, carried the entire village with them.

The rebellion of the people in terms of its political purpose, forms of actions and mobilisation operated on an axis, different from those of the soldiers, Rajas or even thakurs. For those standing above them, the ordinary faceless mass of villagers and their rebellion were peripheral in importance. The Rajas drew their revenue and the thakurs, their essential supplies. Otherwise, the people were left alone, their initiative and resistance ignored in the overriding struggle for power. Yet, the alternate domain of these superior powerholders comprised of those numerous

villages and their residents. The efficacy of the rule of Ali Bahadur, Laxmi Bai, Dowlat Singh or Burjore Singh, their strength and credibility depended on the support of the villagers. Whether allied to the revolt of the sepoys or the uprisings of the thakurs or existing in isolation, the actions of the people were what rebellion required and authority was anxious about. If the subordinate people and their resistance have so long been overlooked in historical discourses on 1857-58, it is not because they do not merit study. Elitist preoccupation and misplaced priorities have for long recounted the movement only as a tale of certain leaders and their actions. It is time to question the emphasis and review its stilted output.

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Appendix - A.

List of villages that joined the rebels.
From the Tahsildar of Jalaun 7th Sept. 1858.

<u>Villages.</u>	<u>Remarks.</u>
1. Urchela	All are rebels
2. Oaad	-do-
3. Jagatpur	Some people of the Sengar Caste joined the rebellion.
4. Jaganwa	Except the barkandazes, all the thakurs joined.
5. Duvera	All joined.
6. Dhanora	All the Gujars joined.
7. Rehan	All the thakurs joined.
8. Rohra	Some people joined.
9. Sadupura	Gujars joined.
10. Surajpur	Some people joined.
11. Sheikhpur-buzurg	All the thakurs joined.
12. Kakura Karondi	The whole village joined.
13. Kadila	All the Sengars joined.
14. Gohan	Some people joined.
15. Marori	The whole village joined.
16. Marora	-do-
17. Ratanpur	Sengars joined.
18. Madrakia	-do-
19. Manka	Some joined.
20. Kasunda-buzurg	All the thakurs joined.
21. Garelapur	Sengars joined.
22. Maujupur	All joined.

Appendix - A (Contd.).

<u>Villages.</u>	<u>Remarks.</u>
23. Hansakhurd	All joined.
24. Haripura	Some joined.

(Urdu - Persian Records, Jalaun Basta
No.4, File No. 94. p. 8. U.P.R.A.A.)

Appendix - B.

List of villages some of whose residents
joined the rebels.

From the Tahsildar of Deva, 30th Aug. 1858.

<u>Villages.</u>	<u>Those who joined.</u>
1. Deori	A few Chamars of the village.
2. Biranjha	Raghan, Nirpat and Bhole, Lambardars.
3. Sondra	Cultivators of the village.
4. Jeetpura	A few Bhadorias.
5. Kelear	Zalim Singh with his men.
6. Silha Buzurg	Chattar Singh with the cultivators.
7. Bujnoor	A few persons.
8. Jorayl	Lambardars and few others.
9. Sendri	Lambardars.
10. Akidpura	A few people.
11. Deora	Mansukh Rai.
12. Nainapura	Hatti Singh.

(Urdu - Persian Records, Jalaun. Basta No.4,
File No.94, p.22, U.P.R.A.A.)

Appendix - C

Names of villages whose residents voluntarily joined the rebels.
From : Debiprasad, Naib Tahsildar, Kunar, 31st August, 1858.

NAME OF PARAGANA (1)	MAUZA (2)	NAMES OF PERSONS WHO JOINED (3)	NAMES OF PERSONS WHO DID NOT JOIN (4)	R E M A R K S (5)
1. Kunar	Gursenda	Jeevan Singh & members of his community - Caste Sengar	Officials, patwaris and chaprasis of the tahsildars.	All the residents of this Mauza were rebels, belonging to the castes - thakurs, dhobis, Kahars and chamanars. All the thakurs were in the service of Roop Singh.
2. Kunar	Pipree - Gaharwar	Mir Singh, Lambardar, Bihar, chowkidar and the Patwari.	Mohan Lal Tiwari	The rest of the villagers all joined the rebels irrespective of being Ashrafs or Kamins and all these people looted on behalf of the Raja of Bhudek and joined the rebel Layak Singh.
3. Kunar	Wazirpur	Layak Singh Lambardar, Raghan Singh, Maharaj Singh, Bahadur Singh, Kumar Singh, Bhoop Singh and Rohan Singh.	-	All the people here are armed and all are rebels.
4. Kunar	Madnipur - Kotohan	Sheo Singh - Lambardar and his brethren.	-	All the villagers were rebels.
5. Kunar	Malpur	Ram Singh - Lambardar and his brethren	-	-do-

Appendix - C (Contd.)

NAME OF PARAGANA (1)	MAUZA (2)	NAMES OF PERSONS WHO JOINED (3)	NAMES OF PERSONS WHO DID NOT JOIN (4)	R E M A R K S. (5)
6. Kunar	Bijoli	Geree Singh, Manohar Lal Kayast & other residents of the village.	Paltulal Kayast	The rest of the zamindars and caste dhobi, chamar etc. have joined the rebels. They came to Jalaun to plunder and loot.
7. Kunar	Dun	Bahan Singh & Ratna Singh, Lambardars. All the residents of the village belonging to the caste Sengar.	-do-	All the villagers were rebels.
8. Kunar	Sarsang-pura	Adhar Singh - Lambardar, Chattarjit, Ganesh prasad, Gokul Singh, Kalyan Singh etc.	Parmeshwari Das, Jamna Prasad, Ram Prasad chaprasi, Manhavan Munshi, others.	Rest were all in the service of Tantiya Topi. Have now joined Layak Singh.
9. Kunar	Lodhipur	Brindavan and others Lambardars and their brethren and ryots.	-	The full village joined the rebels.
10. Kunar	Rupapur	All the residents of the village.	A few brahmmins of the dubey caste.	The entire village joined Suba Singh.
11. Kunar	Islampur	Bihari Tiwari, Gir-dhari Tiwari, patti-dars, Budha Brahmin.	Lalsha Brahmin, Dulari others.	Except for those named in Column (3) no. one joined the rebellion.
12. Kunar	Mohanthao-pur	Mohan chamar along-with all the chamars.	Ishri-Lambardar	Except for those named in Column (3) no one else joined the rebellion.
13. Kunar	Hassanpur	Harisingh, Chedi, Bahadur & others.	-	No one is for the government; all are rebels.

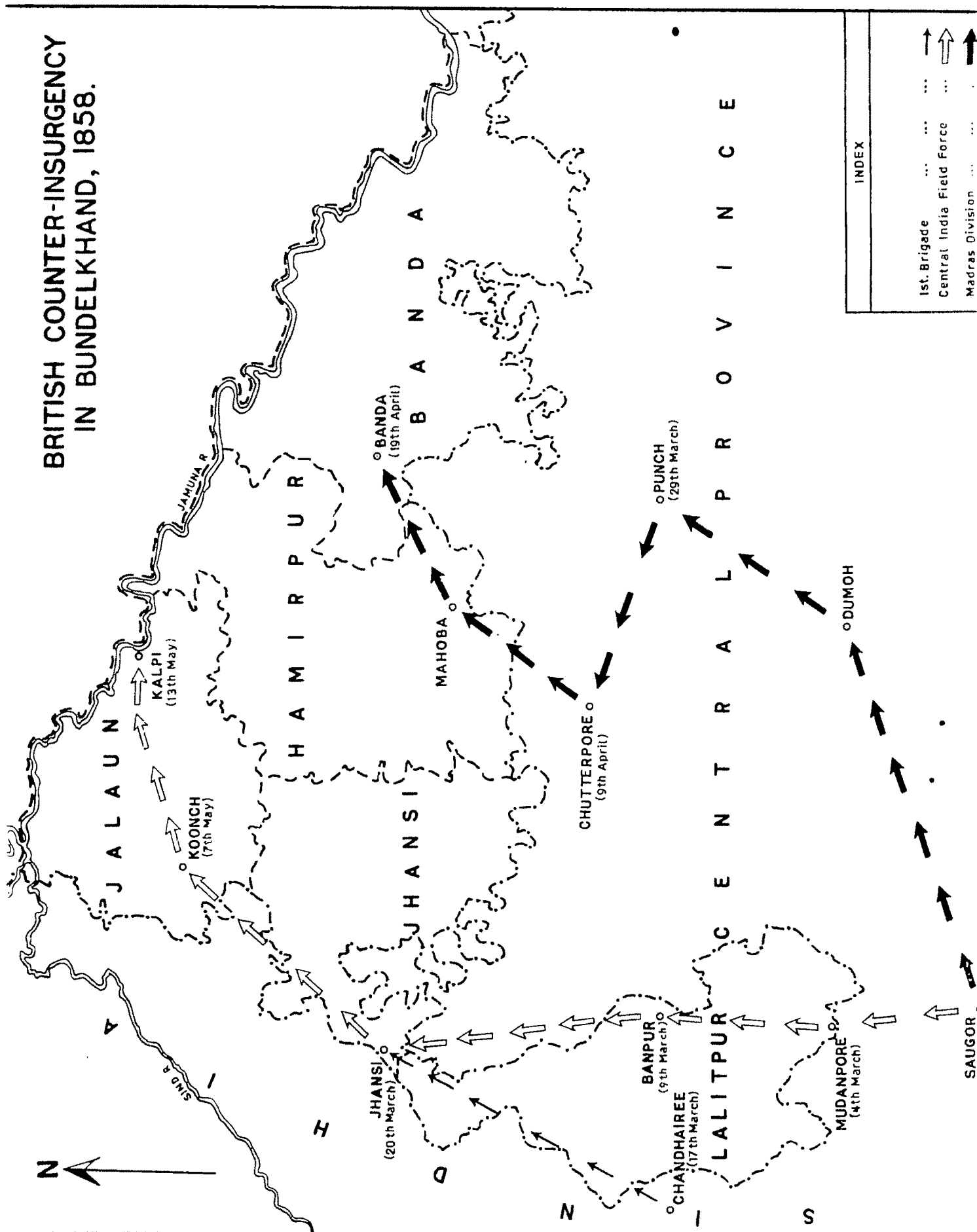
NAME OF PARAGANA (1)	MAUZA (2)	NAMES OF PERSONS WHO JOINED (3)	NAMES OF PERSONS WHO DID NOT JOIN (4)	R E M A R K S. (5)
14. Kunar	Ehadehak	Mansook Singh, Pritam, Jangi Tiwari & others.	Shukool - Lumbardar.	The rest are rebels.
15. Kunar	Chautha	Manak Singh, Bhikam, and Buddu.	Durga Singh, Kamal Singh, Bhoop Singh and brethren.	-do-
16. Kunar	Parayan	Gyansham Lodhi and others.	-	-do-
17. Kunar	Baraoli	Lal, Ganesh, Mukund Ahir, Pancham Mochi.	-	-do-
18. Kunar	Girenda	Harprasad and Debi with brethren.	-	-do-
19. Kunar	Dostpur	Parsad Ahir, Gangadhar, Mangaliya Bakal, (Baniya, grocer).	-	Except those mentioned no one joined the rebels.
20. Kunar	Mahona	Isar Ahir with brethren and Katari.	-	-do-
21. Kunar	Damras	Bahadur Singh, Garhi Singh with brethren caste - Sengar.	-	All are rebels.
22. Kunar	Kurnellapur (Karendapur?)	All the cultivators.	Pyarelal and others	Except those named no one else found.
23. Kunar	Rahauli	Gandhorpat Singh Sundar Singh caste - Sengar	-	All joined the rebels.

Appendix - C (Contd.)

NAME OF PARAGANA (1)	MAUZA (2)	NAMES OF PERSONS WHO JOINED (3)	NAMES OF PERSONS WHO DID NOT JOIN (4)	R E M A R K S. (5)
24. Kunar	Ajitpur	All the Lambardars and the Ryots (Kashtkar)	-	All joined the rebels.
25. Kunar	Garrhadiya	Lachman Singh and his men.	-	-do-

(Urdu - persian Records, Jalaun, Basta No.4, File No.94, pp. 4-6, U.P.R.A.A.)

BRITISH COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN BUNDELKHAND, 1858.



Chapter VIIThe State resurrected

British counter-insurgency measures and the suppression of the revolt.

The rebellion of 1857 in its concerted attempt to negate the structure of authority at different levels, posed one of the most formidable challenges to the British State in the 19th century. To salvage the wrecked machinery of Government in Northern India, the British retorted by way of indiscriminate reprisals and furious retaliation on the strength of its singular military force. Rebellion and authority were thereby put to a trial of strength for the appropriation of power. What was at stake was the entire construct of the State that one fought to retain and the other hit back to recapture.

British counter-insurgency operations were undertaken almost immediately after the outbreak in Delhi. Disguised in these operations were a whole set of notions, perceptions, an entire ruling class ideology related to authority and rebellion. It was in tune with them that counter-insurgency measures were arranged along certain priorities regarding steps to be taken both for the re-assertain of power and for punishing those considered responsible for the aberrant incident. The first concern of the British was to overpower and outbid the strength of rebellion by sheer force and a display of military power. The question was to be resolved in a straight armed contest between forces of the rebels and those of the retaliating Government. Reacting to the situation, the British Government

sent large contingents of troops, singularly well-organised and well-armed, that headed for the principal pockets of rebel concentration in the major towns and cities. Therefore, the first battles were fought over the towns of primary importance - Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow, that took up the best part of 1857 between June and December. After the northern centres were re-taken, the British turned to the peripheries in Central India and Bundelkhand. Here again the priorities were set on the chief urban centres of rebel stronghold - Lalitpur, Jhansi, Kalpi, Kunch, Banda. Once in command of the pivots, the surrounding country was brought round. The priorities worked between two sets of arrangements - principal towns of the North vis-a-vis the peripheral towns of Bundelkhand and towns by themselves vis-a-vis the rural countryside.

The stress on towns had a certain logic. The primary node of State power lay in the towns from where its effective authority emanated over the surrounding country. By capturing the towns in 1857, therefore, rebellion assumed the most frightful apparition before the British rulers. It had to be exorcised quickly and at any cost. The danger threatening authority was all the more great because the forces positing challenge in the towns carried with them the ready makings of an alternate structure of power. Almost every large city had an erstwhile regional potentate to act as the figure-head of the new regime which was adequately provided with, by the military strength of a well

organised army. It was the latter that caused great concern to the British. An indispensable appurtenance of the State, the army now used the power it derived from authority to turn it over. The mutiny of soldiers was not any longer confined to their own professional complaints but had spread to appropriate political power. The braiding of political ambition and military power in the rebellion of 1857, proved hard to overcome. In its counter-insurgency march thus the British army first confronted soldiers whose rebellion constituted the first **layer** in the pattern of the movement we have constructed. The first plans for reoccupying Bundelkhand were drawn towards the end of 1857 and acted upon in January the next year. It was proposed that two separate columns would be sent to this region. The first, marching from Bombay was to sweep across the entire division in the west, from Indore to Kalpi, reconquering Jhansi on its way. The second column from Madras would set up its base at Jabalpur and march across eastern Bundelkhand to reach Banda, eventually in order to be able to establish links between this area and Allahabad. Kalpi and Banda in short, constituted the points towards which the two columns were to be separately directed.¹

7.1 Campaigns against the towns

The division to march from Bombay with Mhow as its headquarters was renamed the Central India Field Force and

1. John Kaye, History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58. (reprint Connecticut, 1971) Vol.V, p. 91.

comprised of two brigades, one under Brigadier C.S. Stuart of the Bombay army and the other led by Brigadier Steuart, of the 14th Light Dragoons at Sehore. The command of the entire force was delegated to Major General Sir Hugh Rose, who formally took office on the 17th of December 1857.²

The army to assemble at Jabalpur was to be directed by Brigadier General Whitlock of the Madras division who arrived there from the south on the 6th February 1858.³ It was Rose with his Central India Field Force who began the first counter-insurgency operations in Bundelkhand. He was accompanied by Robert Hamilton, the Governor-General's Agent for Central India. Between January and June 1858 (by when all the principal towns were recaptured), British measures to reset their State apparatus here, were wholly in the nature of a series of military exploits, characterised by successive attacks on various rebel strongholds that were defeated and uprooted.

Hugh Rose, commanding 2nd brigade of the Field Force started from Mhow on the 6th of January and headed for Rahatgarh, a fort, south-west of Sagar where the rebels were strongly entrenched. The 1st brigade under Brigadier C.S. Stuart left Mhow on the 10th to March in a parallel line with the 2nd upon Chanderi.⁴ British forces⁵ reached Rahatgarh

2. Ibid, p. 94.

3. Kaye, op.cit., pp. 133-134.

4. Ibid, p. 95.

5. The brigade that marched to Rahatgarh was under the command of Brig. Steuart of the 14th Light Dragoons, Lowe, op.cit., p. 166.

on the 24th of January. After six days of determined combat offered by the two sides, Rahatgarh and the entire region in the south right up to Sagar were captured by the British army.⁶

Sagar was Rose's next target of attack. Here the Europeans and some soldiers loyal to them had, for the past eight months, been besieged by rebel forces who captured all the other strong holds in this district.⁷ The town was relieved on the 4th of February and a neighbouring fort at Garhakota (25 miles east of Sagar) was taken on the 15th. The army returned to Sagar on the 17th⁸ and thereafter the march for Jhansi was commenced.

Jhansi was some hundred and twenty-five miles north of Sagar and between the two cities lay the passes of Malthone, Madanpur, the fort of Maraura and the towns of Shahgarh and Banpur, all of which resolutely stood to resist the British forces. Anticipating a long and difficult expedition ahead, Rose took some time in Sagar, to replenish his provisions of food, ammunition and elephants. On the evening of 26th February, a column of the Hyderabad contingent under Major Orr set out to march in parallel with the rest of the army which started at 2 a.m. the following morning for Bundelkhand.⁹

6. Kaye, op.cit., pp. 95-98.

7. Ibid, pp. 98-99.

8. Lowe, op.cit., pp. 185-186.

9. Ibid, Kaye, op.cit., pp. 100-101.

The division had to be entered from the south through either of the two Passes at Narhat and Madanpur, along the southern boundaries of Lalitpur. Narhat was a difficult Pass to cross through and it was rendered more so by the rebels (who were fairly certain that the British would come this way) barricading all the roads around it. Their main strength was in fact concentrated here. To deceive them, Rose diverted his march towards Madanpur, the weaker of the rebel outposts, while making a feint attack on Narhat by sending a small contingent towards the town and fort of Malthone, just above the Pass. The primary assault was directed against Madanpur, where Rose with his entire force arrived on the 3rd of March. After some hard fighting the Pass gave way, the rebels evacuating Madanpur together with the forts of Serai and Maraura and the towns of Malthone and Narhat. The British found the entire country between Sagar and Jhansi, east of Betwa, with the exception of Talbehat cleared for their march up north.¹⁰

On the 9th of March, the victorious army began their course for Banpur enroute to Jhansi. They found the town almost totally deserted as were all the villages that fell on their way.¹¹ Preceded by the Hyderabad contingent, the British forces then marched on the 12th upon the town of

10. From Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose to Maj. Gen. Mansfield; Chief of the Staff, Kanpur, Camp before Jhansi, 26th March 1858. Govt. Gazette, N.W.P., Vol.I, No.XV, Allahabad, Tuesday, June 1, 1858. pp. 154-160. F.S.U.P. pp. 302-305.

11. Lowe, op.cit., p. 221, From G.F.Edmonstone, Allahabad to C.Beadon, Calcutta, 16th March 1858. For. Sec. Prog. 30th April 1858. No.326. (N.A.I.).

Talbehat which had also been evacuated by its inhabitants.¹² Meanwhile the 1st brigade led by Brigadier Stuart successfully breached the fort at Chand^eri and seized it on the 17th of March, forcing the rebels to flee and disperse. The fort was dismantled, all ammunitions captured and what remained of the fort and its contents handed over to a detachment of the Scindia's army.¹³

The triumphant British forces were thus all set for the crucial expedition to Jhansi. Great importance was assigned to the reoccupation of this city. The fort at Jhansi was regarded as the stronghold of the formidable rebel forces in Central India, their main strength south of Jamuna. It was also the place where all the English, men and women, had been killed and where, to borrow Kaye's language, "...

- hatred to the English name had been illustrated by acts of the most wanton barbarity".¹⁴ The imperative need to prostrate the strength of rebellion in Jhansi was thus not only exigent to the resurrection of the mauled state machinery, the importance assigned to it also masked the British ethics related to crime and its deserving punishment. Jhansi deserved severe punishment for the gravest sin she had committed in killing Europeans.

12. Lowe, op.cit., p. 225.

13. From C.A.Stuart, Brig. Commdg. 1st Brigade Central India Field Force to the Asstt. Adjutant Gen. C.I.F.F. Camp. Masjid-ghat enroute to Jhansi, 21st March 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 10th Sept. 1858, No.25 (N.A.I.).

14. Kaye, op.cit., p. 106.

On the 20th of March, Rose arrived with his 2nd Brigade at Simra, one day's march from Jhansi. The same day he dispatched a Cavalry and Artillery force under Brigadier Stewart to reconnoitre and invest the town.¹⁵ Just when Rose prepared to set out himself with the main force, the British camp received two letters, one from the Governor-General for Robert Hamilton and the other from the Commander-in-Chief to Hugh Rose. The letters contained explicit directions for the General to divert his march from Jhansi to Chirkhari in order to relieve the loyal Raja besieged for sometime by the rebel forces led by Tantya Topi. Chirkhari was some 80 miles away from where the army stood while Jhansi was only a distance of 14 miles. It was doubtful if the British forces would be able to reach Chirkhari in time to retrieve it from rebel control. On the other hand, operations against Jhansi, it was felt would draw Tantya Topi and his men from Chirkhari for the relief of this most important town in Central India. Overriding the order from his superiors therefore, Rose acted on his own discretion and set out at 2 in the morning of 21st March, for Jhansi.¹⁶

The fort-town was invested the following night on the 22nd of March.¹⁷ The fort was exceptionally strong,

15. From Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose, Commdg. C.I.F.F. to Col. Green, Adjutt. Gen. of the Army, Bombay, 30th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 13th Aug. 1858, No.26. (N.A.I.).

16. Kaye, op.cit., pp. 107-108; To Rice Holmes, History of the Indian Mutiny (London 1904), pp.508-509 & Appendix Q, p. 622, F.S.U.P. pp. 297-299.

17. Kaye, op.cit., p. 110.

protected by extensive and elaborate outworks of solid construction and buttressed by determined military entrenchments thrown up by the rebel forces inside. After long and repeated reconnaissances, Rose set up seven flying camps of cavalry around Jhansi to invest it, obstructing the road from the city by digging trenches and abattis. The General ordered fire finally on the 25th, the day 1st Brigade arrived from Chanderi with its siege guns. With their immeasurably superior arms and ammunition, both in quantity and in quality, (the 18 pound guns and mortars of different sizes), the British army was able to effect the first decisive breach of the fort wall on 30th March. A continuous fire kept up on the breached portion of the fort weakened the rebel defences and the English occupied portions of the town in the south. But by now the ammunition reserve of the British had been seriously depleted so that for further attack they had to take recourse to escalating the fort walls.¹⁸

Preparations for storming and direct actions were being finalised when Rose's attention was distracted by the news that Tantya Topi leading a large army was marching from Burwa Sagar, south east of Jhansi, intending to attack the British camp from the rear. Leaving behind the 1st brigade to continue the siege at Jhansi, Rose marched with the some of his forces on the 30th to Bupoba, a village six miles away, overlooking the two fords at Rajpur and Kolway by way of which the rebels coming from Burwa Sagar had to cross the

18. From Maj. Gen. H. Rose to Col. Green, 30th April 1858. For. Pol. Progs. 13th Aug. 1858, No.26. (N.A.I.).

Betwa. Rebels crossed the river on the 31st evening and the two forces struck the first battle, the following morning. It was a difficult hard-fought engagement whose outcome was largely decided by the well-directed flank attacks of the British. Tantya Topi's men were forced to retreat beyond the river, scattered and dispersed.¹⁹

The British forces now concentrated on prostrating the strongly entrenched antagonists in Jhansi. In order to be able to receive quick and precise information, Rose set up a telegraph post on the hill commanding Jhansi and the surrounding country. Everything set, the storming parties marched to positions assigned to them at three in the morning of the 3rd of April. No sooner was the signal given out than they dashed to attack the town. A major part of the town including Laxmi Bai's palace was occupied by the British army, the same day; and by the morning of the 5th, the fort gave in. It was a difficult battle as both the sides had a lot at stake. But Rose's superior military strategy and especially his effective direct assaults carried the day. A motley of soldiers temporarily brought together to resist authority failed to compete with the latter's well-provisioned and disciplined army under the command of one of the most astute and experienced Generals. Determination, courage and a defending ideal succumbed to the sheer might of the invading army. Rebellion lost Jhansi,

19. From Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose to the Chief of Staff, Camp Pooch, 30th April 1858. Govt. Gazette, N.W.P. Vol. I, XXII. Allahabad, Tuesday, July 20, 1858, pp. 321-328. F.S.U.P. pp. 309-313.

authority took over the city.²⁰

The British army was now well-poised for launching its second major expedition in Bundelkhand against Kalpi. This town on the Jamuna was the major arsenal of the rebels and the head-quarters of Tantya Topi, being extremely well provided with artillery and provisions. The occupation of Kalpi would complete the immediate task assigned to the Central India Field Force and enable it to clear the entire stretch of territory between Jhansi, Kalpi and Agra for the reassertion of British authority.²¹

Leaving behind a small garrison in Jhansi, Rose set out for Kalpi on the 25th of April with the 1st Brigade. Meanwhile, the British army was reinforced by fresh troops from Rajasthan and an infantry regiment that was to join the march upon Kalpi. Before starting himself with the main force, Rose detached Robert Hamilton and Major Gall with a flying column to precede him on the road from Jhansi to Kalpi in order to keep track of the rebel movement. He also sent Major Orr with a small unit of soldiers to prevent the Rajas of Banpur and Shahgarh from fleeing south from Kunch. Orr gave the two Rajas a battle at Kotra and defeated them but could not stop them from crossing Betwa and taking to the south. Orr proceeded to Kunch.

20. From Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose to Col. Green, 30th April 1858. For. Pol. Prog. 13th Aug. 1858. No.26(N.A.I), Kaye, op.cit., pp. 115-119; From F.W.Pinkney, Suptd. of Jhansi to W.Muir, Secy. to the Govt. of the N.W.P. Jhansi, 7th April 1858. F.S.U.P. pp. 322-325.

21. Kaye, op.cit., p. 119.

Rose joined Gall and Hamilton at Puch, 16 miles from Kunch on the 1st of May. The 2nd brigade and the 71st Highlanders arrived on the 5th. It was here that the General learnt of the rebel occupation of Kunch where they were determined to make a strong opposition to British advances upon Kalpi. Kunch was surrounded by woods, gardens and temples with high walls, all of which afforded it natural defence. The rebel force had further fortified it by throwing up entrenchments around, which were armed in order to defend the roads leading to Kunch from Jhansi. Vedettes and strong pickets of cavalry were stationed outside the woods. Rose calculated that the excessive heat of May and the strong defences around Kunch would render injudicious any long operation against Kunch, much less a siege. Dividing his force into three columns, Rose led a flank march on the 7th to the north-west where the defenders were least prepared to receive them. The rapidity with which the entire operation was directed took the rebels totally by surprise and after barely an hour's combat, the rebels failed to stand up to the British assault and evacuated Kunch retreating in orderly and well-disciplined groups towards Orai and Kalpi. The British army pursued them for some time to disperse and scatter them and largely undermined their resources, both in terms of the soldiers lost and ammunition and stores seized.²²

22. Ibid, pp. 122-124; From Maj. Gen. H. Rose to Maj. Gen. W. Mansfield, Chief of the Staff, Camp. Gulowli, 24th May 1858. G.W. Forrest, Selections from State Papers, Vol. IV, pp. 64-72, F.S.U.P. pp. 313-321; Copies of Telegrams sent by E.A. Reade from 11th May 1858 to 12th Jan. 1859; (U.P.S.A.L.) F.S.U.P. pp. 371-372.

Defeat at Kunch considerably demoralized the rebels but they gathered together their last reserve of energy and resources to hold Kalpi and ".... win their right to Paradise by exterminating the Infidel English." ²³ In spite of its weak fortifications, Kalpi's natural position was unusually strong being protected on all sides by ravines and to its rear by the Jamuna from which rose the precipitous rock on which the town stood. The rebels installed armed pickets in the labyrinth of ravines and threw up entrenchments as their first line of defence a few miles in front of Kalpi along the main road. Deep trenches were dug near the entrenchments to arrest the movement of the British army. ²⁴

Gauging the strength of the adversary he had to overcome, Hugh Rose contrived to follow up the rebels and attack them as rapidly as possible, allowing them no time to mobilise their dispersed resources. Learning of the strong defences put up by the rebels on the high way, the General broke off to its right and marched towards the Jamuna and reached a village called Gulowlee about six miles below Kalpi, on 15th May. From here he sent cavalry soldiers across the Jamuna to Lt. Col. Maxwell who was about thirty miles off on the other side of it, requesting him to move up to the river immediately. Two Pontoon rafts were floated to keep up communication with the other side. The Central India Field Force

23. From Maj. Gen. H. Rose to Maj. Gen. W. Mansfield, Camp. Gulowli, 24th May 1858. G.W. Forrester, Selections from State Papers, Vol. IV, pp. 64-72. F.S.U.P. pp. 313-321.

24. Ibid.

from Bombay united for the first time with the Bengal Army to undertake combined operations against Kalpi.

From the 16th to the 20th of May, successive skirmishes finally precipitated one of the most serious combats in Bundelkhand. On the 21st, batteries from Maxwell's camp across the river, opened fire on the fort and town. The day after, the rebels struck at the British camp at Gulowlee both from the left and right. The attack from the left was a feint one to divert the British attention to be followed by the main body concentrating to overwhelm the defence on the right. A hard day's battle followed during which the British army were on several occasions uncomfortably cornered. It was fresh reinforcement of a camel corps and an incessant volley of fire from across the Jamuna that saved the day for the British. They were able to defeat the rebels forces and drive them away from Kalpi while themselves entering the town and occupying it early on the 23rd morning.²⁵

Thus the Central India Field Force under the leadership of its commandant Hugh Rose, re-took in about five months all the major towns in western Bundelkhand. The first lap of reasserting the State power here in this region was successfully accomplished. A pursuing column was sent after the fleeing force but this time without much success.

25. Kaye, op.cit., pp. 127-130; From Maj. Gen. H. Rose to Maj. Gen. W. Mansfield, Gwalior, 22nd June 1858. Forrest, Selections from State Papers, Vol. IV, pp. 82-103. F.S.U.P. pp. 387-405.

The rebels escaped in twos and threes leaving behind their baggage and even their kit, covering ground so rapidly that the British cavalry could do them little harm.²⁶

The second division of counter-insurgency forces from Madras commanded by Brigadier-General Whitlock had far less obstacles to surmount in their task of recapturing the eastern half of Bundelkhand. By the time Whitlock set out for Sagar from Jabalpur on the 17th of February, much of this region in the south had been overrun by Hugh Rose. On the 5th of March, Whitlock reached Sagar which had already been relieved by Hugh Rose and on the 12th moved east to Damoh. Here, he received instructions from the Governor-General on the 17th that he was to march upon Nagode and Panna and extend assistance to the Raja of Chirkhari. The General left Dumoh on the 22nd of March and arrived at Panna, without hindrance on the 29th. He, however, failed to succour Chirkhari and his army remained halted at Panna till the 2nd of April. Thereafter, Whitlock resolved to march north by way of Chattarpur enroute to Banda. But the route he chose to follow was grossly injudicious and by the time he reached half-way at Mandala, his forces had to halt for three days to repair damages. While at Mandala, he received a despatch from Hugh Rose on the 3rd of April directing him to move with earnest haste upon Jhansi. Whitlock was unable to leave Mandala before the 6th of April. He arrived at Chattarpur on the 9th moved north to Mahoba and then turned east upon Banda.

26. Ibid.

Whitlock and the Madras division had to fight only two major battle with the rebels - the first and the more difficult was at Kabrai, a place little north-east of Mahoba on the road to Banda. Here soldiers lay in ambush intending to fall upon the British army when it passed early in the dawn, on its way to Banda. The Madras division was truly taken by surprise but ultimately succeeded in over-powering the rebels and in arriving before Banda on the 19th of April. The forces headed by the Nawab of Banda here were unusually large and very strongly entrenched in the fort. It called for some serious combat on the part of the British army till it was able to defeat the rebels and force them to retreat and evacuate Banda. Whitlock set up his head-quarters at Banda where a second brigade joined him from Jabalpur on the 27th of May. The only other expedition Whitlock led was against Kirwi which was however occupied without any resistance, the Rao personally submitting to the English General. After the capture of Kirwi, the Madras Division was distributed all over the Bundelkhand districts to consolidate British rule. A portion was required by Hugh Rose in Kalpi, one unit was left at Kirwi while others were dispersed over Mahoba, Jalaun, Banda, Sagar, Damoh and Hamirpur and Whitlock himself moved to Mahoba. 27

Hugh Rose and his forces had still some more hurdles to cross. The rebels from Bundelkhand had assembled in a last ditch stand at Gwalior and it was only after

27. Kaye, op.cit., pp. 133-142.

inflicting on them a crushing defeat that the Central India Field Force was able to relieve authority in Bundelkhand from the impending fear of rebellion. After his heroic march across Central India and Bundelkhand, Hugh Rose formally relinquished his command on the 28th of June and left for Bombay the following day.²⁸

Central India Field Force was broken up and regiments dispersed to occupy different strategic places. The 3rd Bombay Europeans, the 24th Bombay Native Infantry with cavalry and artillery were sent to Jhansi, and the command of the entire force now devolved on Brig-General Robert Napier.²⁹

7.2 Retribution

The expedition of the British counter-insurgency forces was more than a mere campaign of an invading army. It was a crusade that the wounded authority launched to set itself up again and reaffirm its innate strength. The British State staged a come-back with vengeance, retaliating with fury on those who had temporarily destabilised it. The army as a receptacle of its strength acted for it, indulging in brutal, indiscriminate and wanton killing of any one even remotely associated with rebellion. It was no act of legitimate punishment for an acknowledged crime, but merely a furious reprisal, almost thoughtless revenge for having been hurt. Whoever was apprehended or even suspected was summarily put to death,

28. Lowe, op.cit., pp. 295-296.

29. Kaye, op.cit., pp. 162-163.

without the slightest consideration. In this Hugh Rose was no different from his counter-parts elsewhere in northern India and in his final verdicts of punishment, he merely expressed the sentiments of his British countrymen. T. Lowe, who accompanied the Central India Field Force, felt that the General properly assumed the right of dictating what he thought the miscreants deserved.

"But in no instances can it be said that he more than fulfilled the wishes of every right-thinking officer and soldier, or answered to the loud cries of revenge from the nation one little too much. Vengeance-terrible and prompt - was called for, and in the person of the General we had one who was in every way suited to the occasion for its administration to a full and effective measure." In short, every massacre and destruction, murder and havoc that the British army wrought was legitimate, since "... the simoon of British anger was now blowing ... from all quarters in terrible blasts." ³⁰

After Rahatgarh fell, some rebel soldiers were captured by the invading army; all were hung at night over the gates of the fort.³¹ The work of retribution begun early, was an incentive to further and more brutal reprisals. It reached its climax in Jhansi, perhaps one of the only places where the British found inhabitants to unfurl their wild

30. Lowe, op.cit., pp. 153 & 185-186.

31. J. H. Sylvester, Recollections of the campaign in Malwa and Central India under Maj. Gen. Hugh Rose G.C.B. (Bombay, 1860), pp. 59-60.

fury upon. The carnage that was perpetrated in this town for three successive days has few parallels. Soldiers apart, ordinary people were pulled out of their homes or hidings and slaughtered indiscriminately. Houses were burnt and inmates butchered till at the end of those three fateful days, Jhansi ³² turned into "... a slaughter pen reeking under the hot eastern sun." ³³

Few thousands of bodies were buried and burnt by the British themselves, ³⁴ not to speak of the many more that were left to rot. The righteous Englishman suffered no pang of guilt; wanton killing was the justified revenge of the State on the people of Jhansi.

Such savage homicide was accompanied by large scale looting, plunder and destruction of property. The invaluable royal library of Jhansi was completely destroyed, its books torn and thrown away. The European soldiers plundered for days and took away the smallest article of any value that they could lay their hands on. They seized goods worth more than a crore of rupees in booty. If there were not things to take away, there were enough to destroy from sheer sadistic pleasure. After the first batch of soldiers had their fill of the spoils, the soldiers of others

32. A. L. Nagar, Ankhon Dekha Ghadar, Hindi trans. of V. Godse's Majha Pravas. (Lucknow, 1957), pp. 121-123.

33. G.W. Forrest, A History of the Indian Mutiny Reviewed and Illustrated from Original Documents. (London, 1904), p. 215.

34. Lowe, op.cit., p. 216.

regiments who followed, took their turns in sacking Jhansi and her inhabitants. Very little was left behind by the ravaging army of the British State.³⁵ Such depredations were undertaken in all the major towns but Jhansi being the richest had the largest booty to offer.

On resuming charge of the Banda district, F.O.Mayne found most of the valued property destroyed or rendered useless. Writing to the Commissioner of Allahabad, he observed, "I am sorry to say this wanton destruction of private property was committed by some of our armed troops and followers." ³⁶

7.3 Resurrection of the State

Political consolidated followed in the heels of military conquests through successive logical steps related to the State's priorities and its notion of rule, order, hierarchy and justice. The administrative structure that had been set aside was expeditiously reset. But its permanent soldering called for greater care and circumspection. At one level, there was a brazen demonstration of the State's superior military prowess intended to coerce submission. But such an ostentation of supremacy had to earn acceptability, acquire concurrence even if by way of enforcement. Rebellion and its suppression were therefore, placed

35. Nagar, op.cit., pp. 122-126.

36. From F.O.Mayne, Magt. & Coll. of Banda to C.B.Thornhill, Commr. of the 4th Dvn. 1st May 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 28th May 1858, No.68 (N.A.I.).

within the framework of crime and punishment. The ultimate nature of rebellion as the most unpardonable of crimes was set down without qualification. Punishments on the other hand were categorised in a certain order agreeing with the persons relative guilt vis-a-vis the norms of order and stability. Placed against punishments were rewards for avowed loyalty to the State in the period of its crisis. Both were meant to serve a demonstrative purpose of setting examples before the ruled, of the State's concepts of law and order. Rebellion was squarely decried as a crime and collaboration with the British lauded as virtuousness. The first deserved punishment, the latter reward. Retribution and recompensation were thus the early acts of the reconstructed State as the ultimate arbiter of Justice. Once the State had exhibited its sanctioned role, it sought more lasting measures for the perpetuation of its powers. Laws were enacted for reordering the administration thereby rendering it more effective against disorders in the future. Corrective steps were also taken to reorganise the indigenous structure that had revolted, for its easy appropriation into the altered pattern of political structure in the post 1858 era of British rule.

The first need of the British State was to declare itself re-established as it felt its way back to power through successive military campaigns and victories. The progress of its forces unfurled the mantle of its authority over more and more areas. At Maraura, where they reached

on the 7th of March after their victory over Madanpur Pass, the British army hoisted the English flag upon the bastion of the fort and read out a proclamation to the effect that the surrounding territory was annexed and the Raja of Shahgarh disinherited. The artillery fired the royal salute and bands played, " God save the Queen ".³⁷ A similar proclamation was read out in Banpur; on this occasion declaring that the territories of its Raja too were confiscated.³⁸ And by the beginning of June, the Union Jack was flying high in triumph, over all towns of Bundelkhand, a public spectacle of the triumph of the British.

District administrators at different levels next arrived to take charge of their respective duties. How well they were able to do so depended largely on the state of the surrounding countryside. A second wave of invasion was called for; this time directed from the precariously held towns to the country still up in arms. For quite sometime, the British State in Bundelkhand hobbled unsteadily on crutches of the army. Going for the British was particularly difficult in the western districts of Bundelkhand specially in the three districts of Jhansi, Jalaun and Hamirpur. Banda came around more easily. While appropriation of effective control took time, arrangements were formalised. With R.N.Hamilton as the Agent to the Governor-

37. Forrest, op.cit., p. 178.

38. Lowe, op.cit., p. 221; From G.F.Edmonstone to C. Beadon, 16th March 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 30th April 1858, No.326 (N.A.I.).

General for Central India, F.W.Pinkney was to take office as Commissioner of the Jhansi Division and district administration devolved on different Deputy Commissioners. Lalitpur fell to Lt. Fenton, Capt. A.H.Ternan assumed charge of Jalaun, G.H.Freeling of Hamirpur, while F.O.Mayne still reporting to the Commissioner of Allahabad joined the district of Banda as its Collector and Magistrate. All the district officials, however, were not able to take up their respective assignments immediately for military victories had not assured the British effective control over Bundelkhand. In fact, Jhansi was kept under military occupation for sometime as Hugh Rose thought it imprudent to make over the district to civil authorities immediately.³⁹ Ternan and Freeling joined their individual posts soon after but till rebellion in the surrounding country was effectively subverted by British troops, their jurisdiction seldom extended beyond their respective district towns and even here it was on occasions threatened.⁴⁰ In Lalitpur, on the other hand, Lt. Fenton had to wait till the end of August before he could take charge of the subdivision.⁴¹ Mayne was perhaps the only magistrate who was able to resume administration with least opposition.

39. From F.W.Pinkney to W.Muir, Jhansi, 7th April 1858. For. Pol. Cons. 15th Oct. 1858, No.55. F.S.U.P. pp. 322-325.

40. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the Division of Jhansi in 1857-58 By Capt. J.W.Pinkney, Commr. Jhansi, 20th Nov. 1858, paras 103-107, pp. 526-527. G.H.Freeling accompanied by a force reoccupied Hamirpur on the 24th of May and Capt. Ternan took charge of Jalaun on the 10th of May.

41. Ibid.

The concern of the newly resurrected State was now to reset order that would ensure its normal functioning. The two essential prerequisites for normalcy was first, the total extermination and eradication of forces of rebellion and second, revitalisation of the sources of revenue. Steps to ascertain the first being indispensable for the second, were given priority. The existing situation in fact called for it. After the major towns in Bundelkhand were recaptured by the British, determined resistance of the thakurs continued to negate authority in the country. It was a long-drawn contest that spilled over well into the 1860s with the two combatants representing the rebellious thakurs in the countryside and the town-based British authority testing their unequal strength. The two military outposts at Jhansi and Kalpi that the British had initially posted had to be largely replenished with regular troops and for quite some years to come, the British State survived on the unflinching war of extermination that it waged on the rebels. The context in which this battle was launched crucially determined its nature and outcome. Unlike Hugh Rose's campaigns, this war was not an invasion of territories lost. It was undertaken by a re-established State, in offensive retaliation. The outcome was almost predetermined and certain. In a war of attrition, the State was bound to survive and outbid the scattered and spent energies of rebellion.

All the while the British were actively engaged in a second phase of invasion in western Bundelkhand, the

broken-down administration was gradually put back. With some haste and often under proper armed support, tahsildars and thanadars were sent out to the different parganas to take up office and expedite revenue collection. Barely two weeks after his return to Banda, Mayne wrote, "I have thought it better to delay no longer to send out the usual establishments in the District. I could get no troops to support them, but the different Tahsildars and Thannadars had managed to catch a few men who although untrained as well as untried, will do to form a nucleus of the new Establishments." The officials were asked to keep away from the rebel villages and take up position only in those where they were assured of local support.⁴² Even when Jhansi had not been given over to civil administration, thanas and tahsili establishments were set up at different points of the district, as in Gurotha, Bhandere, Katera.

As a matter of fact, the condition of a district was, henceforth, assessed in terms of the amount of revenue it offered. Whether a particular village paid its dues to the Government or not was the ultimate determinant that balanced the scale of justice.

Once the British State was assured of its reinstatement, it had a far more decisive role to play - that of ensuring the stability of its order and gaining acceptance through rewards and punishments. Mayne, the Magistrate of Banda expressed British sentiments aptly in his narrative of

42. From F.O.Mayne To C.B.Thornhill, 13th May 1858.
For. Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858, No.120 (N.A.I.).

rebellion and restoration of authority. "In a district", he wrote, "in which our prestige suffered so considerably, ... the capital of which had been the scene of the public murder and dishonor of our countrymen and women, it was necessary that our return to the District should be accompanied with a force sufficient to make a demonstration to overawe all opposition, and at once to disarm and disperse the disaffected ... it was necessary to make a prompt and severe impression, which would strike terror into the minds of the evil - disposed ..." ⁴³ The wounded honour and prestige of the British had to be nursed back through retaliation. Revenge was disguised in the garb of punishment. But expediency demanded that revenge and punishment had to be mellowed, legitimised and appropriated within the framework of law and order. As Mayne rightly realised discrimination was required for "... where so many had so deeply committed themselves, it was, impossible and undesirable to punish all offenders." ⁴⁴ Local pockets of resistance, deep-seated and widespread disaffection were sure to outlast military conquests. The British State had to gain credibility of the people. It therefore, looked for allies and collaborators on whom it could prop its support.

Appeasement thus, went along with retribution. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858, the Magna Carta of the new

43. Narrative of Events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the District of Banda 1857-58. From F.O.Mayne, Magt. & Coll. of Banda To C.Chester, Commr. Allahabad Dvn. 11th Sept. 1857, Pt.II, para 41, p. 332.

44. Ibid.

order was euphemistically referred to as the Amnesty and issued in all the towns to reassure the terrorized people and entice them back to their normal vocations. In fact it was imperative that they did so for the State to resume work. The British were particularly anxious to have the merchants and moneylenders back in their business. It was a mutually shared dependence and both were equally glad to see the other return. In Banda, while the local residents of the town were more or less apathetic spectators to the turn of events, a deputation of the leading merchants and baniyas waited on the Magistrate "... to express their intense satisfaction of the defeat of the Nawab and the dispersion of his rubble force who had so long oppressed them." ⁴⁵ Needless to say, such sentiments were shared by the trading community in all the other towns of Bundelkhand.

Support from the rest of the population especially from those with influence and some degree of political and social standing was, however, more important for a lasting consolidation of Bundelkhand. The local potentates were therefore, wooed first. The more obvious of the loyalists like the Raja of Chirkhari and the Rais of Gurserai who suffered equally from rebellion, were asked to assist the British in course of their reoccupation of the division. After rebels were defeated and driven out of Kunch, the town was temporarily handed over to the Jagirdar of Gurserai to hold it, for the

45. From F.O.Mayne to C.B.Thornhill, 1st May, 1858, Banda Diary, For. Sec. Cons. 28th May 1858, No.68. (N.A.I.).

British.⁴⁶ The Raja of Chirkhari's services and troops were likewise put to constant use for bringing the district of Hamirpur around.⁴⁷ As regards the other Chiefs, the Amnesty carried a bait that those who surrendered willingly would be pardoned their lives. The Rajas of Banpur and Shahgarh, the Nawab of Banda and the Jagirdar of Kirwi gave in. Though deprived of their holdings, status and rank and in most cases deported, none were physically harmed.

The thakurs, the zamindars, the peasants and the soldiers gave the State little options for in the eyes of the British too many of them were deeply implicated. Punishment therefore, had to precede rewards. Yet, punishment had to be tempered because it was retributive justice awarded by a bonafide State. Crimes were structured according to their perceived intensity and only the gravest of them were given the highest penalty. In a letter dated 24th June 1858, G.F. Edmonstone, Secretary to the Government of India wrote to Robert Hamilton with directions that,

"Exclusion from the Amnesty ... should be confined to those who have taken part in the murder of Europeans, to those who were in the service of the Government and to those who have been proclaimed as ring leaders in the rebellion.

The Governor-General does not consider it advisable to exclude all those who have been proclaimed rebels,

46. From E.C. Bayley, Offg. Deputy Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. to G.F. Edmonstone, Secy. to Govt. N.W.P. Allahabad, 10th June 1858. Narrative of Important Events for the week ending 31st May 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82, (U.P.S.A.L.).

47. From E.C. Bayley to G.F. Edmonstone, Allahabad, 1st July 1858. Narrative of Events from the 31st of May to the 7th of June 1858. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl.No.77, Vol.82, 1858 (U.P.S.A.L.).

because His Lordship believes that some men of little importance have come under that head in Bundelkhand." 48

The most unpardonable felony in the perception of the State was the killing of Europeans and those in any way implicated in it were put to death. For, they had not only defiled the norms of propriety they had committed the gravest crimes of having laid hands on English men and women. Punishment here did not need to disguise unabashed revenge on those directly responsible for such outrages.

For putting into application the principles of punishment and rewards, special Commissions were set up under Acts XI, XIV and XVI of 1857 whereby civil and military officers were empowered to try mutineers and other suspected rebels and to mete out punishment including death penalty, without appeal. 49 In accordance with this provision, the Magistrates of Banda, Hamirpur and Jhansi drew up lists of offences and the offenders deserving most severe punishment. G.H. Feeling the Magistrate of Hamirpur put down eight cases most likely to come up under the Penal Acts, the first being without exception murder of Europeans and all those implicated in any way. 50 Every magistrate, however, sent weekly reports on the lists of persons sentenced under the Commission

48. From G.F. Edmonstone, Secy. to the Govt. of India, N.W.P. to R. Hamilton, Agent to the Govt. Gen. for Central India, 24th June 1858. C.O.J. Sl.No.45, File No.41 (U.P.R.A.A.).

49. T.R. Metcalf, The Aftermath of Revolt. India, 1857-1870. (Princeton, 1965), p. 293.

50. Cases likely to come up under the Penal Acts, By the Magistrate & Spl. Commr. of Hamirpur. 19th July 1858. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box.No.7, File No.1, Dept.XIII. (U.P.R.A.A.).

and charges brought against them.⁵¹ Needless to say, lists of persons believed to have taken part in the murder of Europeans, mutinous soldiers regarded as leaders in the uprising and principal rebel-thakurs, were most exhaustive. The others were either pardoned or simply fined. To earn the acquiescence of the people to the rule of the resurrected British State, it was absolutely necessary that there be discrimination in the judgements passed. Therefore, sentences of death passed against persons regarded as potentially dangerous to order and stability were accompanied by reassurances to others ~~not~~ found guilty.

Most of the rebel thakurs particularly those identified as ring-leaders had either died fighting or eluded apprehension. But a few who submitted were not only pardoned but in deference to their local influence, the British in some instances, as that of the Jagirdar of Narhat, even left their property intact.⁵² They were, however, universally disarmed, their garhis were dismantled and their retainers disbanded. When the much-hated and much-hunted Dowlat Singh of Indurki surrendered in 1871, he was acquitted.⁵³ Chattar Singh was

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51. From F.W.Pinkney, Commr. of Jhansi Dvn. to R.Hamilton, Agent Gov.Gen. for C.India, 27th July 1858. For. Sec. Progs. 24th Sept. 1858. No.23 (N.A.I.); From the Spl. Commr. of Banda, 31st Dec. 1858. Banda Coll. Records. Box No.25, Sl.No.40, File No.41(III) Dept. XVIII (U.P.R.A.A.); From the Magistrate of Hamirpur to the Commr. 15th Dec. 1858. Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.1, Sl.No.1, File No.3, Dept. XIII (U.P.R.A.A.).
52. From Maj. W.C.Erskine, Commr. Jabalpur Dvn., 12th May 1858. For.Sec. Cons. 25th June 1858, No.124 (N.A.I.).
53. State Vs. Dowlat Singh. Urdu-Persian Records, Jalaun. Basta No.2, Sl.No.5, File No.5 (U.P.R.A.A.).

perhaps among the few thakurs who were captured and hanged to death. ⁵⁴

the
In/case of villages, in every pargana there would be three or four demarcated as most recalcitrant. They were invariably burnt down, the houses of the headmen destroyed, ringleaders hanged or transported and others deeply concerned, flogged. In other villages considered less guilty, a compromise was made whereby they escaped with lesser penalties. A fine was, however, universally levied on rebel villages to defray the cost of restoring all public offices in the district town and the parganas. ⁵⁵ F.O. Mayne punished five villages in July 1858 for their hostile treatment of the English men and women who had fled from Nowgong a year before. Alongside with this, Mayne "... caused it to be everywhere proclaimed that this punishment is on account of their especially infamous conduct". ⁵⁶ The State had to win back the confidence of the people and assuage their worst fears.

During the rebellion, an emergency disarming act XXVIII of 1857 was passed carrying provisions for seizing arms from the people with the exception of European and their loyal subjects. Some 35 lakhs of rupees worth of arms were

54. From G. Couper, Secy. to the Govt. of N.W.P. To Maj. F.W. Pinkney, Commr. of Jhansi, Kanpur, 9th Jan. 1861. C.O.J. Basta No. 8.5 (ii), Sl. No. 7, File No. 88 (U.P.R.A.A.).

55. N.E., Banda. Part II, paras 41-42, pp. 332-333.

56. From E.C. Bayley to G.F. Edmonstone, Allahabad, 10th Aug. 1858. Narrative of Imp. events for the week ending the 1st Aug. For. Dept. N.W.P. Narratives, Sl. No. 77, Vol. 82, 1858. (U.P.S.A.L.).

confiscated in the course of that year and the next with search parties maintaining a perfect reign of terror on the rural population. Assured of their authority in 1859, the provincial governments and the district officials urged that the search for arms be even more intensified. F.O. Mayne at Banda suggested the enactment of a simple concise act empowering Magistrates to seize all arms under penalty of 7 years' imprisonment, a fine of Rs.5,000 or 100 lashes. "If we ever wish to govern the Natives of India effectively," he added, "we must treat them as they are and not as civil and intellectual beings."⁵⁷ The arms that the Indians carried had been most effective in trampling over the authority of the British and in impeding their easy recovery. The blind fury and the unbridled spirit of vengeance now poured forth on those possessing arms. Yet, on practical considerations the anger had to be diluted once again to mitigate widespread fear and panic. A letter was, therefore, sent around to all the Chiefs of the Native States in Bundelkhand dispelling the rumour that the British Government intended to disarm them.⁵⁸ Punishments were designed to enforce what the State regarded as discipline and to make an example of it. But it could never under any circumstances be carried to the point of alienating the support of those whose collaboration acted as the major props of the reinstated British State.

57. Metcalf, op.cit., pp. 306-307.

58. Substance of a Kharita to be prepared for each of the Chief States in Bundelkhand from Agent Gov.Gen. for Central India, Camp. Chirkhari, 23rd Sept., 1859. For. Pol. Progs. 14th Oct. 1859, No.117 (N.A.I.).

As a coup de grace of the British policy of reconciliation and appeasement, the Governor-General decided to hold a darbar in Kanpur for the reception of the Raja of Rewa and all the principal native loyal Chiefs of Bundelkhand on the 1st or 2nd of November 1859. Rewards to jagirdars were also to be given out then.⁵⁹ The affections of the local aristocracy had to be won back through bestowed honours and through restoration of their land and property.

Wooing the landed aristocracy was a part of the general scheme conceived by the British for strengthening their rule and for disallowing the possibility of another insurgency recurring. The uprising drove home at all levels of Government the need for the State to gain acceptance and credibility if not from the majority, at least a chosen few dependable allies. The rural landlords were looked upon as the natural mediators between the masses of people and the State. Therefore, this class had to be brought back with power and property but with their interest inextricably linked with those of the State. The restoration of aristocracy in Awadh was now extended to other parts of the North-Western Province.⁶⁰ The rebellion was also a precursor to a series of legislations between 1857 and 1861 subjecting different branches of administration to reform and reorganisation. Acts passed in 1857 as urgent, emergency measures were more in the nature of punitive steps unrelated

59. For. Pol. Cons. 30th Sept. 1859, Letters Nos.6-15 (N.A.I.)

60. Metcalf, op.cit., pp. 162-163.

to any far-reaching, policy. Along with Arms Act and Acts under which special Commissions were established, Press Act was passed in June 1857 placing all newspapers to strict censorship. Once the feverish operations for suppressing the forces of rebellion were carried through, the State in retrospection harped on the wisdom of enforcing more lasting care. Penal codes and codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure subjected the whole country to a uniform legal structure and to expedite justice High Courts were set up in all provincial capitals. Greatest attention, however, went to the reorganisation of the army. As Indian recruits were drastically reduced and carefully drawn from Punjab and Nepal, the State's basic military character was reinforced. ⁶¹

Through different stages, by force and with caution, the British State was rebuilt in Bundelkhand. It was contrived to be more powerful, zealously guarding its rights and interests. The resistance that the people of Bundelkhand at different levels mustered, put authority on its guard. It is one of the ironies of history that the very structure that rebellion essayed to dismantle was revived and even reinvigorated, while the latter was scotched without hopes of recovery.

61. Ibid., pp. 253-255 & 297.

Appendix - A

Cases likely to come up under the Penal Acts.
From the Magistrate & Spl. Commr. of Hamirpur,
19th July, 1858.

1. Murder of Europeans - all in any way implicated.
2. Sepoys, belonging to mutinous regiments at present hiding away in villages many with their arms.
3. Men of the same class but who were not sepoys employed in Government or in Gwalior but who have taken part in the disturbances, have fought against the Raja of Chirkhari when acting for the British, have helped to man the fort at Maudha, and the entrenchments Serowli, which resisted the British troops sent from Kanpur, and fired on them. They are the class of men who will join Despat's band if he pushes on up towards this as seems likely.
4. Men who took service under the Nawab of Banda, did what work he ordered, or other Chiefs who succeeded him - helped collect revenue.
5. Government servants who acquiesced in the existing order of things who obeyed Sheikh Wahi-du-zuman's orders to proclaim the British rule at an end and went on with their duties as quickly and willingly under the Peshwa's name as under the East India Company. Are such men to be punished?
6. Villages who have been notoriously rebel who have assembled to aid in the attack of Chirkhari, who have driven out the police and have generally been known as enemies to Government (sic).
7. Villages that took advantage of the times to plunder their neighbours and against whom petitions are presented.

(Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.7, File No.1,
Dept. XIII. U.P.R.A.A.).

Appendix - B

List of Persons believed to have taken part in
European murder and who have not been apprehended.

From the Magistrate of Hamirpur to the Commissioner,
Bereë, 15th Dec. 1858.

1.	Rahimuddin Khuda Bux	Chief man of the Baoni Nawab's Auxiliary forces on whose arrival the Mutiny broke out.
2.	Ali Bux	Subahdar of the 56th Regl. N.I.
3.	Rattuah, Gangadin	Ahirs who betrayed the Officers to the rebels.
4.	Jan Ali Muktiar	Very prominent throughout.
5.	Iman Khan	Naib <u>Jamadar</u> of the Kutchery Guard.
6.	Jeurakhan, Bhola Singh, Behari Singh Daffadar, Kallu Ahir, Gangadin Ahir, Bihari, Jaisukh Misr, Ramprasad, Sheo Bux, Kalicharan, Purma, Munnoom Khan, Furgunt.	These men were all <u>najibs</u> of the <u>Kutchery</u> guard and personnel guards and were stationed at the door of the Collector's door. They were all undoubtedly with Iman Khan implicated in the murders.
7.	Amanat Ali	Jamadar of the <u>Sowars</u> , one of the very worst.
8.	Saidshah Khan & Willagat Ali Khan	They were both <u>sowars</u> and to them Mr. Lloyd gave money to provide for the roads but they went over with his horses and money to the rebels.
9.	Absan Khan, Sheikh Chand, Sultan Khan, Hyat Khan, Izzat Bux, Salar Khan, Amir Khan, Abdul Aziz.	All <u>sowars</u> and all deeply implicated.

(Hamirpur Magistracy Records, Box No.1,
Sl.No.1, File No.3, Dept. XIII U.P.R.A.A.)

Appendix - C

List of Offenders who have not been pardoned.

From F.W.Pinkney, Commr. of Jhansi Dun. to Sir R.Hamilton.

Agent : Gov. Gen. for Central India, 27th July, 1858.

1. Dowlat Singh, Kuchwahagar thakur.
2. Chimnaji, his father.
3. Burjore Singh, thakur of Belawan, Jhansi.
4. Gangadhar Luchman of Jhansi.
5. Luchman Rao of Jhansi.
6. Junardan Bullar of Jhansi.
7. Jangjit Thakur of Busnere.
8. Chattar Singh Thakur of Kukerbai.
9. Dabi Singh Thakur of Mowai. This man has not yet been proclaimed, but since the Amnesty has been proclaimed, he has attacked the party and killed 4 sepoy's at the thana of Erich of which he now has possession (sic).
10. Gambhir Singh Thakur of Mowai.
11. Mahip Singh Thakur of Jaclone.
12. Chattrasal Thakur of Jaclone.
13. Hamir Singh of Pali.
14. Jujhar Singh of Manickpur.
15. Chet Singh, muktia of the Banpur Raja.

(For Sec. Progs. 24th Sept. 1858, No.23. N.A.I.)

List of Persons who have taken a leading part in the present rebellion, prepared from papers on record in the Home Dept.

1	2	3	4	5
NAMES (1)	DESIGNATION (2)	PLACE (3)	R E M A R K S. (4)	
1. Ali Bahadur	Nawab of Banda	Banda	X Mr. Chester, Commr. of Allahabad writes, "I believe .	
2. Mohammad Sirdar Khan	Deputy Collector	"	X there is no doubt that the Nawab of Banda has joined	
3. The Jail Darogah	-	"	X the rebellion and that Mohammad Sirdar Khan, the	
4. Wahiduzaman	Deputy Collector	Hamirpur	X Dy. Coll. has become his Chief advisor and abettor."	
5. The Zamindars of mouza Romeyri		"	Reported by Mr. Mayne to have played false.	
6. Ganga Sahi	<u>Sherishtadar</u>	"	This man, Mr. Chester writes, is no doubt concerned in the rebellion.	
7. Mirza Rahim Beg		"	These men were most prominent and active in crime.	
8. Bhao Tantiya.		"	Issued <u>parwanas</u> in obedience to the orders of Nana Sahib of Kanpur	
9. The Jagirdar of Gurserai.		"	X Appointed by Nana, Subahdar & Dewan respectively in the Division.	
10. Niaz Ali	Deputy Collector of Mote	Jalaun	He took possession of Jalaun and then went to Orai where he was joined by the mutinous troops of Jhansi.	
11. Tai Bai	A descendant of the female side of the former Chief of Jalaun.	"	He was with the mutineers. It is not quite certain where he was under arrest or joined them.	
12. Rao Dowlat Singh	Unknown	"	In open rebellion.	

Appendix - D (Contd.)

NAMES (1)	DESIGNATION (2)	PLACE (3)	R E M A R K S. (4)
13. The Rani of Jhansi	-	Jhansi	Through her treachery, the Fortress fell into the hands of the Native Troops mutinying and a general massacre of Europeans of every age and sex took place.
14. Saleh Mōhammād	Native Doctor of Jhansi troops.	"	-
15. Bakshi Ali	Jail Darogah	"	Concerned in the rebellion at Jhansi.
16. Syed Ali	Subahdar of Jhansi Troops	"	
17. Kalay Khan	Ressaladar of the 14th Irregular Cavalry	"	If not the instigator he was one of the most active in the dreadful events of Jhansi.
18. Ahmed Hossein	Tahsildar of Jhansi late Munshi in the Agency Office.	"	Intimately connected with the above <u>Ressaladar</u> in the Jhansi affairs.
19. The <u>Munshi</u> of the Survey Dept. of Jhansi	-	"	This man with his subordinates in office joined the mutineers and opened the Fort where the Christians had taken refuge.
20. The Raja of Banpur	An Ancient Bundela Lalitpur to Chief of the Country.	The district of Lalitpur is believed to be in the hands of this man. Jhansi.	

Conclusion.

The complexities of the movement of 1857 has to be understood in the context of its specificity in time and space. It was through the unique political experience of that summer of 1857 that the rebellion evolved gathering different strands of protest into one single concerted defiance. Local situations and immediate conditions determined patterns of mobilisation, motifs of actions and articulations and the varied expressions of political consciousness. The movement, in effect, was a product of a particular time juncture and local responses to the situation created by the former.

Responses were multifarious. Men subscribing to different levels in the social, political and economic hierarchy responded differently from one another but in relative consonance to those of the same level. The element of deliberate decision and conscious participation was related to the experiences and perception of men belonging to dissimilar positions. The sum total of responses made for a varied pattern of actions and behaviour disguising a myriad assemblage of hopes and aspirations, of political vision and consciousness. The features of the mutiny were different from the uprising of the thakurs just as the reactions of the Rajas could be distinguished from the behaviour of the people in 1857. Men at every level utilised those moments of history to fulfill their aspirations in agreement with their own ideologies.

The rebellion of 1857 in Bundelkhand was thus composed of many layers of actions. The disjunction between one and the other was in terms of time, space and forms and expressions of protest. At each level, the actions moved about an axis of

- their own, rallying together the hopes and future visions of their architects. Villagers in several parganas of Banda rose in rebellion quite sometime before soldiers in the barracks took to arms. The sight of released convicts from Allahabad acted as a signal for the people of village Murka to stand up in revolt against the Government. All this while, soldiers in Banda awaited news from their headquarters at Kanpur and it was only after confirmed news of the overthrow of the English there reached the town that the mutiny began. Thakurs of Lalitpur declared rebellion while the English remained in the station relying totally on the good faith of the soldiers. After the
- mutinies had been stilled by British counter-insurgency forces
- after a series of military victories and the reoccupation of all principal towns by June 1858, the thakurs began a second movement, more persistent and determined. Long after the great rebellion of 1857-58 had ended, rumblings of protest could still be heard in the wilds of Bundelkhand. None of these uprisings can be encapsulated in a single parameter and none can be placed in any unilinear analytical framework. The vision of the soldiers extended far beyond the limited confines of any territorial unit. It contained elements of a centralised order that hoped to replace the colonial State with an alternate, supra-local structure of governance. The actions of the soldiers were all contrived to realise such an alternate framework of rule. They were different from those of the thakurs who chose

to rebuild their immediate surroundings. The mutiny of the soldiers remained urban in character from the beginning to the end and it was links between one town and another and among a large number of towns in Northern India that supported the sepoys' vision of a political order. The thakurs dominated the countryside and if ever they came to the towns, it was only as an extension of their actions rooted in the country. The Rajas operated within limits drawn by their past heritage and erstwhile authority. Even within that limited arena, they were often not independent actors of their own volition but agents for legitimising the alternate political order that others were trying to create. They were rulers not by choice but by default. The initiative eluded them. Finally, the people using multiple forms of protest tried to rearrange the political context in which they and their villages were placed and purge it of undesired contamination. The pattern of mobilisation and forms of political assertion varied with each level. The uprising of the thakurs and the protest of the people were related to the local situation of Bundelkhand and negated the British structure of rule in splinters. The soldiers using the political mantle of the Rajas tried to work out an order that overlaid these splinters and provided them with a coating of another centralised structure of rule.

Even though different levels of protests operated on their respective axes, they were all units that formed the movement of 1857 as a whole. Their specificity was subsumed by the general political atmosphere of the year, territorial

limits were thrown open by the intervention of broader politics. Nana Sahib and Tantya Topi personally came to Bundelkhand to mobilise the soldiers and thereby organise rebellion here. The villagers of Banda heard of uprisings elsewhere from released prisoners of Allahabad, and as if to confirm the news, fleeing Europeans were seen scampering all over the region, frightened, defeated and deprived of authority. Such incidents were unprecedented. Never before had people seen such irrefutable proofs of the British State been overthrown and ousted. Never before had there been such feverish activities across a large stretch of the country of rebel and counter-rebellious forces. Never before had the people of the villages stood up in defiance at a time when the soldiers were in mutiny in the towns; never before had the Rajput thakurs flocked around towns to fight alongside the soldiers. Times were different, the situation was unmatched. At every level, men were forced to respond, motivated to act, compelled to take some initiative. Looking at 1857 from a distance, all appeared as a general conflagration that touched everyone from the Raja to the peasant. To the architects of rebellion, it was once in a life time's experience of the feel of power usurped from the British. It was this particular situation of 1857, the specific context of rebellion that forms the backdrop to all the actions related so far. The peasants' rebellion or the uprising of the thakurs were crucially linked to that situation and context. They did not stand individually as episodes by themselves, in isolation to the surrounding forces. The forms of actions and motifs of articulation might have differed with rank and space. But the spring from which such expressions of political assertion emanated, the source from

which all drew their inspiration to conceive of an alternate order was provided by the year 1857 when the world of British rule was turned upside down.

It was this historical conjuncture that contained points at which the fragments converged and despite dissimilarities, protests at different levels conformed to a general pattern. It was in this wider political context that all men located their common adversary, the British State and it was in counteracting that, that every layer of political actions found a common factor in one another. Opposition to the State and alienation from the British assimilated the fragments into a whole and arranged the splinters into an alternate political structure, albeit multi-layered. True the conjuncture of the units emerged from negativity. All came together, the Rajas, the thakurs, the soldiers and the people to contrive a concerted resistance to the British attempt at staging a come-back. They did not always work together. But the very act of resistance crystallised the structure by bringing all the parts together to form the whole. The spectre of the reestablishment of the British State glued the myriad responses to frame a collage of political actions.

Yet, the rationale of the movement did not lie solely in negativity. Men cherished positive and constructive visions of the future to be and worked towards that end. In all those months of 1857 and 1858, all were engaged in building an alternate political ~~order~~ in agreement to their aspirations and ideals. The soldiers set up the Rajas in the towns, the

thakurs proclaimed themselves as rulers of their kingdoms and the people chose their own kings. Even though propped up in power by others, the Rajas too were driven to evolving strategies of actions, thereby disguising initiatives at upholding an order in place of that of the British. Destruction and depredation too contained political actions, positive choice, discrimination and calculations. All symbols of the British State were systematically uprooted with a specific purpose and not as a random and mindless behaviour. It was in such positive edification that Despat's actions were relevant to the entire movement, the antagonism of the villagers of Geori Mugli in Banda towards the Europeans had in common with the mutineers in Delhi and all regional, local resistance tied up to the broader movement that stretched across northern and central provinces of the sub-continent. They were all seeking to construct an order on the ruins of the British State.

It is not for us to judge if the movement of 1857 was retrograde or forward-looking. It would also be unfair to the makers of rebellion to treat their actions within the general and a linear framework of being a stage, a mere disjuncture in the interface of a colonial State and the people. 1857 has to be relived in the experiences of all those who contributed to make the movement what it was. It is a story of their stress, their anxieties, their hopes, their aims and ambitions. The movement has to be understood in its own language without reference to any pre-conceived definition drawn from situations alien to the

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experiences of the rebels of 1857. The latter had framed their own definition, they had used their own language, just as they had tried to realise their own dreams.

Glossary

Abkari	Revenue from duties levied on the manufacture and sale of liquors, drugs, opium etc.
• Aghaun	The eighth luni-solar month corresponding with November-December.
Al	A plant from the roots of which a red dye is produced to colour the kharua cloth.
Amin	An Indian official of Government employed in the revenue or judicial departments.
Amla	The collective Indian officials of the revenue or judicial departments.
Arzi	A petition, an address, a memorial or representation, oral or written.
Ashraf	Respectable, well-born.
• Aurang	Place where articles of trade are manufactured and collected for wholesale disposal or export.
• Baach	Applicable primarily in a coparcenary village, it is the proportionate rate or division of either land or liabilities attached to them such as revenue or village expenses, amongst the sharers according to their shares.
Babu	A title of respect attached to a name. It is commonly used to refer to Bengali clerks in the English administration.
Badmash	A disreputable person.
Bajra	A species of millet.

Bania	A Hindu trader, shopkeeper or money changer.
Banjar	Waste or fallow land.
Banjara	Travelling merchant who traded mainly in grain and cattle.
Bankar	Income from the produce of forest lands.
Barkandaz	A matchlockman, commonly applied to one armed with sword and shield who acted as doorkeeper, guard or escort.
Batta	Discount or commission.
Bazaar	Market.
Behri	The distribution of revenue, village expenses over subordinate shares in a village. A sub-division of a pattidari or bhaiachara estate, being an unequal fractional part of a thok.
Beopari	A retail trader.
Bhai ^a ch ^a ra	A form of tenure in which estates were held by descendants of a common ancestor forming a brotherhood, the shares and responsibility for Government demand being determined in proportion to the actual area occupied by each sharer.
Bhejburar	A tenure in which the proportions of the revenue or tax payable by the common proprietors of a village were subject to periodical or occasional adjustment.
Bhumi/bhumia	Land / A la-ndlord or proprietor of the soil.

Bhumiawat	A war waged for one's land.
Bigha	A measure of land varying in extent in different regions, usually one-third or one-fourth of an acre.
Burar	Land tax or rent. Apportionment of revenue payments according to agreement with the village community.
Bysack	The first month of the luni-solar year, corresponding to April-May.
Chapati	Thin, flat, unleavened cakes, made of wheaten flour.
Chapras/ Chaprasi	A badge a plate worn on a belt as a mark of office / a messenger or courier wearing a chapras, usually a government servant.
Chowk	A square, open place where market is held.
Chowki	Station of police or customs.
Chowkidar	Watchman.
Chowkidari	The office of watchman. A tax levied to defray the cost of a town or village watch.
Chunari	A method of dyeing cloth, cloth produced in this way.
Dalal	Broker.
Darbar	A royal court, also the executive government.
Darogha	Official in charge of a police, custom or excise station.
Dastak	A permit, passport, writ or warrant.
Deen	Religion, faith.

Dekha-parkhi	Allowances in rent made to cultivators on account of deficient produce.
Dooli	A litter.
Fakir	A Muslim, religious mendicant who wanders about the country and subsists on alms.
Fasli	The harvest year, a mode of computing time.
Firangi	Foreigner.
Garhi	A small fort, a mud fort or a fortified house.
Garhiband	Tenure of land on payment of a quit-rent much below the usual amount. The holder of land on these reduced terms.
Ghat	A landing place, steps on the bank of a river, a quay, a wharf.
Ghi	Clarified butter.
Golandaz	An Indian artilleryman.
Gomastha	An agent, a steward, a representative.
Goonda	Hooligan, ruffian, one of street toughs.
Harkara	A messenger, a courier, an emissary.
Havildar	An officer of the army, subordinate to a Subahdar.
Howdah	A litter carried by a camel or elephant.
Hundi	A bill of exchange.
Jagir	An assignment of revenue usually land in lieu of some specified duty of public service.
Jagirdar	Holder of an assignment of revenue.

Jalkar	Produce from lakes, streams.
Jama	The aggregate amount of revenue assessed upon land.
Jamabandi	Settlement of the amount of revenue assessed; a village or district rent-roll; a register of village holdings; a statement exhibiting the particulars of the public revenue.
Jamadar	A subaltern officer of the army second to the Subahdar; an officer of police, customs or excise, second to the Darogha.
Jehad	Holy war waged against infidels.
Juar	Large millet.
Kachhar	A particular kind of soil on slopes in Bundelkhand.
Kacheri	A court, an office where public business was conducted.
Kamin	Low, inferior.
Kans	A grass very destructive to crops.
Kanun/Kanuni	Rule, law pertaining to them.
Kanungo	Village and district revenue officials who recorded all particulars concerning land and revenue.
Karinda	Agent.
Kartik	Seventh month of the luni-solar calender corresponding to October-November.
Kashtkar	Cultivator.
Kham	Estate managed directly by the officers of Government.
Khandsari	Dealer in sugar.

Kharif	Autumn harvest.
Kharua	A coarse kind of cloth dyed red with al.
Khas	Select, eminent, noble; as a revenue term, applied to the management of estates and collection of revenue directly by the officers of the government.
Khillat	A dress of honour presented by the superior authority to an inferior as a mark of distinction.
Khitmadgar	Servant.
Khudkasht/ Khudkasht raiyat	Cultivating one's own ground. A cultivator of his own lands.
Killadar	Governor or commandant of a fort.
Kist	A sown field.
Koss	A measure of distance.
Kothi	A warehouse, a government factory or establishment.
Kotwal	The chief officer of the police for a city or town, a superintendent of the markets.
Kranti	Money of account, also applied to measure land.
Lambardar	The person who either on his account or as the representative of other members of the village paid the government dues and was registered in the collector's roll according to his number.
Maafi/ Maafidar	Land exempted from revenue demand on grounds of service or pious donation/holder of such land.

Mahajan	Merchant, banker, moneychanger and creditor.
Mahal	A division of a district, yielding revenue according to assessment.
Mahaut	The driver of an elephant.
Mahto	The head of a village, caste or trade.
Malguzar	The person who paid the revenue assessed on an estate or village whether on his own behalf or as a representative of others, to the Government.
Malikana	An allowance assigned to a zamindar or a proprietary cultivator for the management of the estate, collection and payment of revenue, the amount being not less than 5 p.c. and not more than 10 p.c. of the net revenue realised.
Mar	The rich black cotton soil of Bundelkhand.
Maurusi/	Hereditary tenant with occupancy rights.
Ghair Maurusi	Cultivator holding land on lease for a stipulated term.
Mauza	A village.
Mehtey	Head of a village.
Mehut	Allowance enjoyed by a mehtey.
Mukhiya	A head arbitrator as the chiefman in a village or caste.
Munsif	Civil judge of the lowest rank.
Mustajir	A renter, a farmer of revenue.
Najib	Noble. A body of irregular infantry under former Indian government.
Naib	Deputy.

Nankar	Patches of rent-free land given to sub-proprietors.
Nazim	Superior officer or Governor of a province entrusted with administration of criminal law and justice.
Nazrana	A gift, present or tribute from an inferior to a superior.
Padri	Christian priest.
Pahikasht	A non-resident cultivator, tenant at will.
Paik	Lowest ranking soldier, armed man employed in the revenue department.
Panchayat	Council of village elders for settling disputes.
Pargana	An administrative unit comprising of many villages, something akin to a sub-division.
Parauti	Land left fallow.
Parwa	Light, sandy soil of yellowish tint found in Bundelkhand.
Parwana	An order, a permit or pass, a warrant, license or writ.
Patta	A deed of lease specifying the rights and conditions of the cultivators and undertenant.
Patti	A share or division of land into separate portions or strips.
Pattidari	A form of land tenure in which the village is broken up into shares known as thok, patti.
Patwari	Village accountant.
Peshkash	Tax, tribute or present to the ruling family.

Phagun	11th month of the luni-solar year corresponding with February-March.
Phalkar	The produce from fruit-trees, reckoned as part of the assessable income of a village.
Phant	A villager register of occupants and their liabilities.
Pouth	A tenure of land in coparcenary villages of Banda where fields were subject to periodical redistribution among sharers.
Purohit	A family priest.
Rabi	Spring harvest.
Rais	Rich man.
Raiyat	A cultivator, peasant.
Raja	King.
Rakar	A variety of soil on uneven land in Bundelkhand.
Rani	Queen.
Risala	A troop of horse.
Risaladar	Officer commanding a troop of horse.
Sadar	The chief seat of government.
Sahib	The usual address and designation of an European.
Sahukar	A banker, a dealer in money and exchanges.
Sanad	A grant, a charter.
Sarkar	A division of country, sub-division of a Subah.
Sawan	4th month of the luni-solar calender, corresponding with July-August.
Serai	Rest house for travellers.

Sipahi	Soldier.
Sipah salar	A General, a commander-in-chief.
Sirkar	Government, ruling authority.
Shroff	Banker.
Shuka	Sealed letter from a superior.
Sowar	A cavalry soldier.
Subah	A province.
Subahdar	Governor of a province; the highest Indian rank in the Company's army.
Tahsil	Collection of public revenue derived from land. Sub-division of land for purposes of revenue collection.
Tahsildar	Collector of revenue from a given tract.
Tahsildari	The office, duty or jurisdiction of a Collector.
Taki	An irregular levy of money.
Tari	Lowlying moist land.
Tehal	Quarterly.
Thakur	An individual entitled to respect or reverence. Usually used to refer to Rajput landlords.
Thana	Police station. Police jurisdictions into which zillahs were divided.
Thanadar	Officer-in-charge of a thana.
Thansa/thanka	A tenure prevailing in Bundelkhand in which land held at a gross rental for the entire holding, not by soil or field rates.
Thok	A sub-division in a coparcenary village.
Thug/thugi	Dacoits of Central India. The acts of dacoity.

Tomandar	One in charge of a toman, a unit of 100 men.
Tili	A variety of seasamum, used for making oil.
Tuccavi	Government loans given to cultivators.
Ubari	A class of tenure in Bundelkhand, subject only to a quit rent.
Ubaridar	Holder of such tenure.
Vakil	Lawyer.
Vilayati	Afghan mercenary soldiers.
Zamindar	Landholder, landed proprietor.
Zamindari	Right that extended over land occupied by a number of persons.
Zilla	District.

All the information used in this thesis has been very broadly categorised under the two heads of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include both manuscripts and printed records. Secondary sources are primarily books and articles. Only those records and books directly used here have been mentioned.

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MAPS

1. The North-Western Provinces showing the Districts and States under the Jurisdiction of the Lt. Governor with the adjoining Province of Oudh.
2. North-Western Provinces, Sadar Board of Revenue. Geographical map of the district of Jalaun in the province of Bundelkhand.
3. North-Western Provinces, Sadar Board of Revenue. Map of the district of Hamirpur.